THE ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

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THE ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY

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THE ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY

BY

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

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Inscribed

WITH AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE

TO THE CONGREGATION

OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

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"If this life be not a real fight, in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is no better than a game of private theatricals from which one may withdraw at will. But it *feels* like a real fight."

— WILLIAM JAMES.

PREFACE

In publishing this essay upon immortality, it is useless, and in most cases impossible, for me to indicate in detail my indebtedness for the lines of thought which here are interwoven. The general considerations which support faith in everlasting life have been canvassed so often that extensive originality in arguing for immortality is out of the question. Whatever freshness of thought this essay may possess will be found in the fact that the problem of life after death is viewed from the standpoint of the twentieth century and is discussed in terms of the special difficulties and the prevailing attitudes which exist to-day. Old arguments must take new direction from the banks of the generation's thought between which they flow. In particular I have had in mind the man, conscientious about his daily work, with whom the words honor and friendship, fidelity and courage, weigh heavily, but who, occasionally lifting his thought to the prob-

lem of life everlasting, speedily turns away, saying: "What difference does it make? At least I can do my present task well, and if there be any world beyond the grave, I will face it, when it comes." This prevalent attitude is often maintained in admirable spirit and is accompanied by an honorable and useful life. But there are considerations which such an attitude leaves out of account, and to these the attention of this essay is specially directed.

The reader will find the understanding of the argument easier if he keeps in mind the general outline of the thought. In the first chapter, I try simply to point out the real and present importance of the problem which we are considering; in the second chapter, I try to show the inconclusive nature of the arguments commonly urged against a future life; and in the third chapter, I try to present the positive reasons for a modern man's assurance that death does not end all.

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK.

August 6, 1913.

THE ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY

CHAPTER I

The Significance of Immortality

I

One of the most noticeable contrasts between this generation and those immediately preceding it, is the relative unimportance of the future life in the thought of the present age. When our forefathers were at all religious, and often when they were not, they not only took for granted the fact of continued existence beyond the grave, but they regarded it as a matter of supreme concern. When in the eighteenth century Butler constructed his impressive argument for revealed religion, he used the soul's deathlessness, not as a conclusion to be established, but as a premise to be assumed. Even with radical thinkers outside the churches, faith in the future life could then be presupposed as a common point of agreement, while within the churches men's hopes and fears

of immortality dominated their religious thought, and made this present life significant largely because it was preparatory to the glories or the terrors of the life to come. Our fathers, therefore, hardly could have understood the present generation's scepticism about the truth of immortality; much less could they have comprehended that modern nonchalance which speaks and acts as though it made but little difference whether or not men live beyond the grave. A recent writer tells us that in our unwillingness to die and have that the end of us, "We have not passed far beyond the attitude of peevish children who refuse to come in at nightfall after they have played outdoors all day." This cavalier belittling of the significance of life to come is prevalent to-day even among religious men. They do not so much disbelieve in immortality; their scepticism lies deeper; they do not care. With some such phrase as "One world at a time," they commonly dismiss consideration of the future life, regarding immortality as indeed a possibility, but a possibility whose import is postponed until they die. To

insist, therefore, that the persistence of personality beyond the grave involves tremendous issues for our present life, is today not by any means superfluous.

The reasons for this decline of emphasis upon the importance of the world to come are easily discernible. For one thing, the impact of new scientific information concerning the evolutionary origin of man and the intricate relationship between the mind and brain has shattered confidence in the certainty of life to come. The manifold causes which in our day have unsettled old religious beliefs, and have cast doubt upon or utterly discredited supposed bases of faith that had gone unquestioned for two thousand years, have made unstable the hopes of immortality. With that admirable power of adaptation, therefore, which is one of the noblest elements in human character, men, finding their confidence in a future life vanishing, have set themselves to make the best of the new situation, and have stoutly asserted that the change makes little difference. Even a Robinson Crusoe looks for compensations in his condition, when he finds himself

upon a solitary island, and men, at their best, believing that this life is all they have, will resolutely make the most of that, and as an armor against the malice of their fate, will courageously affirm that they do not care, that one life is enough, and that the difference is inconsiderable after all.

In addition to this initial cause for the decline of emphasis upon the importance of immortality, is an even nobler reason. Men have gathered new hopes of racial progress in our day, and, at their best, are increasingly inclined to sink their individual prospects in their expectations for humanity. The social passion finds voice in pulpits as well as on secular platforms, and proclaims there what our fathers would not have thought of saying, that our mission is not to get men into heaven, but somehow to bring heaven to earth. What Narodny said of Russia, "I am nothing; personal success, happiness, they are nothing; exile, Siberia, the Czar's bullet, they are nothing; there is just one thing, that Russia must be free," men in a larger sense are saying of the human race. Hope of a future life, with its rewards and possibilities, has a

mean look in the light of such self-forgetful passion, and as new discoveries open new hopes of progress for mankind, one hears scores of men wish that they could see America a hundred years from now, for one man who, after the old fashion, longs for heaven. What difference does it make whether another life awaits us after death, so long as here we play our part like men, and hand down the heritage of the past, so purified and furthered by our thought and sacrifice that our children will rise up to call us blessed?

Another reason for the decline of emphasis upon the importance of the life to come is not so creditable as the other two. In the present age, this life has been made vivid and interesting in an unexampled way. Old isolations have been overcome, so that the whole world is now the province of any mind that chooses to be cosmopolitan, and rapidity of communication has made possible world-wide enterprises on such a scale as no previous age has ever known. New knowledge has consumed the thoughts of men, and new avenues of wealth have engaged their ambitions, until the contem-

plation of eternal destiny has paled before the immediate brilliance of this present world. For men are like auditoriums; they can hold so many occupants and no more; and when the seats are filled and even the "Standing Room Only" sign has been removed, the next comer, though he be a prince, must cool his heels upon the curb. The minds of men have been preempted by the immediate and fascinating interests of this vigorous, exciting age. The fact is not so much that they through reasoned disbelief have discarded faith in immortality, as that through preoccupation they have lost interest in anything beyond the grave.

Even a deeper reason, in the realm of serious thought, helps to explain the modern depreciation of immortality. Eternal life is a matter of quality and not of time, men say. Justice and goodness, beauty and truth exist eternally in God and may be incarnate in our transient human lives. Let the individual die; the value of his spiritual quality, which alone is worth preserving, is perpetuated in the life of God. From God came all the worth of our charac-

ters, to him it shall return and in him it shall never die. Not in our small individualities, but in his persistent Being,

> "All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist."

The only Eternal is God; of him we are but broken lights; and our flickering lives, luminous with his quality, may be eternal in this sense only, that we can mean what he means, we can incarnate in time the spiritual values that in him are absolute and timeless. Must every little candle burn forever, that so light may persist? Must each separate breeze be perpetual in order that the air may still enswathe the earth? Shall the special waves insist on perpetuity when they but represent the ocean that abides behind them, and in them and millions like them is expressed?

These are four outstanding reasons for the modern doubt, not only of the fact, but of the importance of personal immortality. There are other reasons, operative in all generations — the pessimistic mood that does not want to live again, the worldling's hatred of the hopes and fears that would deprive him of comfort in self-indulgence —

but these four causes, not by any means dishonorable, lead even the best of men to-day to wonder how much difference it makes whether belief in immortality be accepted or denied.

To be sure, one value for our present life which faith in immortality possesses is evident to all. It comforts men in the hour when bereavement comes, when human hearts discover that by as much as love is great, by so much must grief be deep. But men are not assured that they have any right to expect comfort from the universe. They do not propose to find solace in a lie. They do not want the opium of a dream to ease them of their heart's distress. If the only value for life which faith in immortality possesses is the value of comfort, folk for that very reason will mistrust their right to it, will fear lest their desire for consolation may drive them to seek it in a hope that is not true. Even though a man has cried with Tennyson:

> "Ah, Christ! if it were possible
> For one short hour to see
> The souls we loved, that they might tell us
> Where and what they be,"

he has not drawn appreciably nearer to confidence about the future, nor has he even dimly seen the deepest issues which are implied in the acceptance or denial of immortality.

II

The directest way by which we may perceive what difference to life is made when we believe or disbelieve in the continuance of personality beyond the grave, is to give free range to all our doubts and let them carry us into a frank and full denial of everlasting life. The affirmation that death ends all is a creed as clearly as is the assertion of immortality. Let that creed be asserted, and let all the implications of annihilation be followed to their logical results. In what sort of world do we then find ourselves? What difference to life does that assertion make?

However superficial his first impression may prove to be, the ordinary man who, after believing in immortality, now turns to consider a world from which the hope of a future life has been obliterated, feels an unavoidable sense of injustice to the race.

What Professor Palmer of Harvard wrote, with fine restraint, when he recorded his wife's decease, we instinctively feel about the whole prospect of personality's annihilation: "Though no regrets are proper for the manner of her death, who can contemplate the fact of it and not call the world irrational, if out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter it excludes so fair a spirit?" If death ends personality, the universe seems to be throwing away with utter heedlessness its most precious possessions. Whatever evaluations of the world may be questioned, no one doubts that personality, with its capacities for thought, for character, for love and for creative work is the crown of all existence. Out of what travail, age-long and full of agony, has personality been born! By what vast struggles, admirable in their sacrificial heroism, has the moral life of man been attained and preserved! A reasonable person does not build a violin, with infinite labor gathering the materials and shaping the body of it, until upon it he can play the compositions of the masters, and then in a whim of chance caprice

smash it into bits. Yet just this the universe seems to be doing if immortality is false. Longer ages than our minds can conceive she has been at work upon those forces which underlie our personalities, and now when Jesus and Augustine and Luther and Lincoln are possible, when at last a spiritual man can be the residence of poets' dreams and martyrs' consecrations, when the mind can think truth and the heart can love righteousness, are these supreme triumphs of the age-long, universal toil thrown utterly to ruin?

Before a man, however, surrenders himself to this instinctive revolt against the unreasonableness and injustice of a world that creates personality only to destroy it, he must face the mitigating considerations which have been suggested, the alternatives to personal immortality which have displaced in many minds the hope of individual continuance. Many take refuge from the malice of an obliterated life in the hope, already mentioned, that the worth of personality, in terms of its goodness, its justice and its love, is made perpetual in the life of God. What we lay down, he

gathers up and makes eternal, and so the spiritual gains of our human struggle are perpetuated even though human individuals do not persist. But just what does this mean? It is easy to speak of justice as a quality in God, of which we may be the temporary representatives and the value of which we, dying, may know to be perpetual in him, but does not this in the face of searching thought turn out to be merely a form of words? Justice cannot exist in a solitary being whether he be God or man; justice is a quality impossible except in social relationships; and God himself cannot be just without being just to some one. So, all the moral values that we know, truth, goodness, love, are forms of personal activity that never would have existed without social life, and that have no meaning whatsoever apart from relationships between persons. To imagine God, therefore, in some sublime and timeless solitude after the race is gone, hoarding within himself the values of the justice, truth and goodness, which have been wrought out in the experience of the race, is to conceive an absurdity. When

this earth has come to its inevitable dissolution and the persons who lived upon it have vanished utterly, will God indeed preserve within himself the spiritual gains of our human struggles, just without being just to any one, true yet true to no one, perpetuating all our love, yet loving no person save himself? Then the justice, truth and love which are eternal in God have no imaginable likeness to the qualities which we mean by the words. The moral gains of the race are all social in their genesis and in their expression. What can altruism mean in a universe without separate personalities; or honor, or sincerity, or loyalty, or faithfulness? These are all terms applicable only to individuals sustaining a mutual relationship. The obvious fact is that the only hope of preserving the moral gains of humanity lies in the persistence of a community of human persons. Love, righteousness, fidelity, in an absolute and unrelated Being, are inconceivable.

Moreover, spiritual quality in the very nature of the case cannot be detached from a man to be appropriated and preserved

by God. All spiritual quality is simply personality in action, and when the personality perishes, the action ceases as well. The human mind has been able to conceive this reabsorption into God, to whom in some mysterious way, we, with our dying gasp, hand over all our moral gains, only by translating it into physical terms. The ocean can reabsorb and merge its separate drops, that lose their identity and give their substance to the sea. So our bodies can commingle with the earth, and dissolving can give their elements to the common stock. But the essence of personality is self-conscious separateness. That men, on becoming extinct as persons, can hand over their qualities, abstracted from them, to swell the general sum of spirit in the universe, is inconceivable. A man's goodness is as inalienably his possession as greenness is the possession of the tree, and only when the greenness can persist after the tree is gone, can righteousness, abstracted from the personality whose function it is, fly unattached to be assimilated by another. Such detached spiritual qualities are as impossible as the grin of the

Cheshire cat in "Alice in Wonderland," that stayed after the cat was gone. The philosophy of reabsorption offers no hope of preserving the values which humanity has attained; it promises no future save endless cycles of recurrent existence, as the central Being sends out emanations and reabsorbs them in unintermittent and meaningless succession. If ever there shines a gleam of hope in a thinker of the pantheistic school, it is because in spite of all his words, he has kept at least the shadow of persistent personality, in whose endless increase the spiritual gains of experience can be preserved. The plain fact is that moral qualities are forms of personal energy, and cannot persevere apart from the persons whose attributes they are.

Another mitigating consideration that is often urged to defeat the malice of personality's annihilation, is that no good life can be in vain, because its influence goes on. But George Eliot's

> "Choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again,
> In minds made better by their presence,"

while it has a literary and emotional value, has little value for thought. One of our leading American astronomers has elaborated in a stirring lecture seven ways, in one of which our present solar system must come to its final cataclysm. Whether or not he has canvassed all the possibilities, it is obvious that the earth on which we live is not a permanent affair. The influence, therefore, which follows in the train of a Christ or a Lincoln is essentially as transient as the personality that first created it, if death ends all. For on a planet which is but a temporary stage, as sure to disappear in time as night is to follow day, we use a few years of dwindling influence as a blanket to cover the tragedy of an annihilated life, when we plead that what Lincoln did will last after what Lincoln was has perished. Both what Lincoln was and what he did, in a world where death is the end, come at last to a like inglorious conclusion.

Moreover, the essential unreasonableness of the universe in carelessly destroying its most precious possessions, when with infinite sacrifice they have been created, con-

cerns not so much the influence of a man as it concerns the man himself. What Christ was is far more significant than what Christ did, and the latter, like a stream, gains all its quality from the spring of personal wealth and power out of which it flowed. Granted that the influence of Jesus for a few æons will go on, what has become of the creative source of that influence? Does the world build a character like that, which has held now sixty generations in its spiritual mastership, and then throw it utterly away? Is God blowing soap-bubbles? Did he dip the pipe of his power in the suds of matter and blow the character of Jesus, that it might entertain him with its iridescence, burst to his satisfaction and be gone? Then in the end the whole race is but a conglomerate bubble, such as children love, in which one lobe adds to the iridescent beauty of another, but in which each in time will break and all at last will disappear. This is the universe without immortality. The words reasonableness and purposefulness, in any connotation known to man, can hardly be applied to such a world.

If, therefore, neither by the perpetuation of our influence, which on a perishable planet is impossible, nor by the assimilation of our spiritual values by God, which is a form of words without conceivable content, can the moral gains of humanity be preserved, we face this consequence to the denial of immortality, that the universe has no way at all of perpetuating the moral gains which our race achieves. Men do not commonly feel that so great a consequence can be involved, when they believe their annihilation. But let a man give wings to his thought; let him rise above all care for his individual destiny, and at an altitude where no selfish desire for hope, no eagerness for personal comfort can deflect his judgment, let him look down upon the earth, and with the creed of annihilation in his thought consider its origin and destiny. What summary of them is possible but this? The planet forms itself gradually from mysteriously whirling star dust, cooling and condensing as it whirls; on the earth so formed life appears, growing in plants, swimming in fish, crawling in reptiles, and at last walking erect in man; in man

life evolves into those mystic functions which we call mind and character, — preferring, with Moses, service to ease, learning with Ruth to cry, "The Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me," praising God in David, in Jesus dying on Calvary for men, and on innumerable altars giving itself in sacrifice for honor's sake and truth's. At last, the planet, its atmosphere devitalized, its heat and light all gone, having come from chaos to chaos must return. After that, not even the memory shall be left of any good that has been done under the sun, but with the death of the last man who falls in a world of graves, all the toil and sacrifice of the race come to their futile end. That is the world without immortality.

The same process may be going on in Mars, but there too the race will work and pray, aspire and sacrifice, only at last to vanish, with not a vestige of memory to hand down and not a moral gain to be preserved. In a world without immortality it would seem that the only permanent forces are physical. They build themselves into solar systems and resolve themselves again,

while life and character, knowledge and spiritual quality, the pride and glory of the race, are as transient as though like smoke rings they had been blown for a moment and had been dissolved. Without immortality physical force alone persists, the builder and destroyer of spirit, and at last the sole survivor and victor over all.

III

It has been customary to enlarge upon the blighting effects which such a conception of the world must have on character. Unquestionably this can be greatly overdone. Huxley is clearly right when in his famous letter to Charles Kingsley, he speaks with restrained indignation of the collect which was read at his son's funeral. "As I stood beside the coffin of my little son the other day," he writes, "with my mind bent on anything but disputation, the officiating minister read, as a part of his duty, the words, 'If the dead rise not again, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' I cannot tell you how inexpressibly they shocked me. I could have laughed with scorn. What! because I

am face to face with irreparable loss, because I have given back to the source from which it came, the cause of a great happiness, still retaining through all my life the blessings which have sprung and will spring from that cause, I am to renounce my manhood, and, howling, grovel in bestiality? Why, the very apes know better, and if you shoot their young, the poor brutes grieve their grief out and do not immediately seek distraction in a gorge." In many a hectic description of the ethical results of disbelief in immortality, preachers have run into danger of such condemnation. "If you believe in no future life," said Luther, "I would not give a mushroom for your God. Do, then, as you like! For if no God, so no devil, no hell; as with a fallen tree, all is over when you die. Then plunge into lechery, rascality, robbery and murder." Such a description of the consequences of doubting life to come is folly.

To be sure, a German philosopher, not a preacher, has pictured in its most desperate terms the meaning of a hopeless world. Men have entertained three kinds of hope, he tells us, and all of them have

failed: first, that they might find happiness in the material comforts of life; second, that they might dwell in bliss in a future heaven; and, third, that they might bequeath to their children a social state on earth where ultimate satisfaction could be found. And now that all these hopes have failed, nothing is left but a universal compact of suicide. That is absurd. Though we all believed that we were bodies only, with a spiritual aspect, and that we were working on a transient task that must come to its finale in a planet's ruin, we would not commit suicide. There are sanctions for right conduct that do not depend upon the outcome of the universe, and values in living, that inhere in every day's experience and do not ask ultimate questions about eternity. Nevertheless, when, believing in annihilation, one takes account of the long travail of the ages, weighs in his imagination all the agony of struggle and misfortune there, and perceives the inevitable end, when, like a burned-out cinder, the earth whirls back to its primeval chaos, he can understand the meaning of the philosopher who wrote: "Considering

the immense and protracted sorrows of mankind, it would have been better if the earth had remained like the moon, a mass of slag, idle and without a tenant."

It is impossible to suppose that this view of the world, to which we are introduced by the denial of immortality, can be without effect upon moral motives and ideals of character. To say that some special man has disbelieved all forms of personal permanence, and yet has lived a life notable for its loftiness of aim and its integrity, is not proof that belief in life to come has a negligible influence on the characters of men. For men everywhere and always have cherished beliefs in some kind of immortality, however undesirable; in Christianity especially, moral motives have ever been associated with affirmations of eternal issues to spiritual life; so that an individual, in achieving his lofty character, may be a pensioner on the accumulated faith of the race, even while he himself denies the faith. Upon the other side, to imagine the sudden breakdown of all belief in immortality, so that the characters of men are deprived of old sanctions and supports

before new ones have been found to take their places, is no fair test of the moral consequences of denying immortality. For all such sudden changes, whether in the end their influence will prove a benefit or bane, must cause an immediate disturbance, easily picturable in desperate terms. If fairly we are to test the moral results of affirming that death ends all, we must grant that affirmation to be true, and then we must conceive the race as gradually discovering the sort of world in which it lives, until at last all men have been convinced that this is the only world there is, that death means annihilation, that in the end the universe throws away its most priceless possessions, and has no way of preserving finally its moral gains. How will the characters of men be affected by such a conclusion, universally believed?

Many a modern man, not altogether thoughtless in his nonchalance about immortality, answers this question with an assertion both familiar and full of noble meaning. "Virtue is its own reward," he says. "Our goodness at its best does not depend for inspiration on the pay it may receive.

Spiritual quality is its own recompense, and does not, like a Moslem beggar, with outstretched palms, ask God for baksheesh." That this affirmation of the self-sufficiency of character is true and elevated is clear to a man in proportion as he is free from spiritual sordidness and is sensitive to the intrinsic worth of moral excellence. Even a little thought, however, reveals the fact that the assertion that virtue is its own reward is based upon a deeply spiritual idea of life's significance. Virtue is its own reward, but for whom? If it be true of all of us, as Tennyson sang of the dead Wellington,

> "We doubt not that for one so true,
> There must be other nobler work to do
> Than when he fought at Waterloo,"

then it is plain that spiritual quality carries with it its own recompense. For then character is eternally progressive, and whatever may be the reaction of the world upon us, whether in gratitude or gibes, in praise or malediction, spiritual life, growing, deepening, forever hopeful of climbing heights of quality yet unattained, of rendering service hitherto beyond our reach,

is a possession so intrinsically and superlatively valuable, that to him who has it no outward recompense is needed as a motive for the love of goodness. But when you take hope from character, when its possibility of progress is seen to end in a blind alley, how is virtue its own reward then? When in some Cherry Hill mine disaster the rescuers leap into the lift and, with eyes wide open to their imminent danger, plunge down into the burning mine intent on saviourhood, and when they straightway are hauled up again, charred corpses every one, in just what sense, if death ends all, was virtue its own reward to them? The recompense of scholarship is the capacity for increasing scholarship; the reward of spiritual life is the hope of the good man to-day that to-morrow he may be better; and without this hope the saying that virtue carries in its bosom its own remuneration has a vastly diminished significance. The pay of goodness is the opportunity to become better.

When, therefore, a man of insight demands a life to come, it is not because he seeks outward recompense for a good life

here; it is because his goodness here, if it is to be passionate and earnest, must have the eternal chance of being better. His value lies in what he may become — not in what he has or does or is, but in his possibilities — and by as much as hope is stolen from him, until he clearly sees that his character is a seed which the frost of accident may nip to-day and which the winter of death will surely kill to-morrow, in so far the heart is taken from the saying that virtue is its own reward.

Of course this does not mean that in a world without immortality an ethical life is impossible. To say that would be preposterous. If the world, long looked upon as a ship whose captain knows the course and outcome of the journey and whose passengers have a destination worthy of the cruise, is now to be regarded as a raft, drifting aimlessly upon the high seas of existence, the temporary home of beings that are born to die, this changed conception will not do away either with the necessity or the possibility of morals. Upon the raft, the worst men will seize what they can for themselves; but the best men, moved by pity for

the plight of their fellows, will establish rules and regulations adapted to the welfare of the whole, will punish offenders, and in many a beautiful self-sacrifice will prefer the good of others to their own. "Pity," says Schopenhauer, the pessimist, "is the only source of unselfish actions and the true basis of morality." Moreover, on the raft, quite apart from questions of the future, fortitude, honor and friendliness may well be recognized as the most worthy attributes of character; scales of moral value may be accepted in which the noblest stoical virtues are made preeminent; and courage and kindliness may be admirably exhibited. From such motives an ethical life may result, hopeless, but under the circumstances far from ignoble. To be sure, when Haeckel, who counts God and immortality delusions, declares that a man has an "unquestioned right to put an end to his own sufferings by death"; when he says, "We have a right, if not a duty, under such conditions to put an end to the sufferings of our fellow-men"; when he admires the ancient Spartan habit of strangling new-born children if they are

weakly, and urges its general adoption, he is making explicit the logical morality of the raft. When Nietsche rails upon all hospitals, orphanages and every kind of saving agency by which we seek to help the unfortunate, and so perpetuate the weak, when the world is needed for the strong, he is clearly stating his vision of the morality of the raft. Tenderness, sympathy, self-sacrifice and love, doubtless would persist, but their tone would certainly be changed. They would be the old qualities which we have known, no longer motived by any eternal value in personality, by any endless possibility of development in character, by any conviction that the spiritual life has everlasting issues which make its failure or success man's chief concern. When one endeavors to picture to himself the noblest sentiments that could find residence in men, in a world where no one dreamed of immortality and all had seen the implications of their disbelief, he can rise no higher than the compassionate spirit which Whittier's sonnet shows:

"My heart was heavy, for its trust had been
Abused, its kindness answered with foul wrong:

So, turning gloomily from my fellow-men,
One summer Sabbath-day, I strolled among
The green mounds of the village burial place;
Where, pondering how all human love and hate
Find one sad level, and how, soon or late,
Wronged and wrongdoer, each with meekened face,
And cold hands folded over a still heart,
Pass the green threshold of our common grave,
Whither all footsteps tend, whence none depart,
Awed for myself and pitying my race,
Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,
Swept all my pride away, and, trembling, I forgave."

So on the raft, for pity's sake men could be kind and serviceable, and even could forgive their enemies. But it is to be remarked that when we seek an expression of this compassionate pity, we must look for it to a man like Whittier, who believes in God and immortality. No Haeckel or Nietsche, who really does think the world a raft and deeply sees the meaning of that creed, has ever left on record any expression of such compassionate regard for men.

IV

The reason for the difference which the universal denial of immortality would make to the motives and ideals of character is

not difficult to see. The attainment of an honorable and useful life costs sacrifice. Present pleasures must be foregone or subordinated for the sake of a central moral purpose, and this fact, which looks simple and unimpassioned in print, in life involves a sacrificial struggle whose depth and intensity the novelists and dramatists of the race have tried in vain adequately to describe. Now, man's willingness to sacrifice for anything depends on his evaluation of its worth. The principal effect of Christian faith upon man's moral life is to be found neither in the scruples which it induces regarding certain sins, nor in the positive duties which it enjoins, but in the transcendent value it places on personality. The New Testament is a treatise upon self-respect. The central theme around which all its harmonies are composed is the spiritual nature, the permanent continuance, the infinite value, the boundless possibility of man. The great affirmations of the Christian Gospel that God created men and loves them, that they are immortal and that God needs them to perfect his work, merge their influence in raising man's evaluation

of himself. In the New Testament men are sons of God, if sons, heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present or things to come; neither life nor death, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature can separate them from the love of God; and being now sons of God, they cannot imagine what they shall be, save that their destiny is exceeding abundantly above all they can ask or think. Men had never thought so highly of themselves before. Celsus, the great opponent of the Christians in the early centuries, goes to the heart of the matter when he says, "The root of Christianity is its excessive valuation of the human soul, and the absurd idea that God takes interest in man." Aristotle had said that some men are born savages, no more changeable than dogs; that artisans are living machines, incapable of virtue; that women are nature's failures in the attempt to make men. The ancient laws had encouraged the slaying of infants as a measure of household economy and had

looked upon slaves in the arena with the beasts as we look upon a hunt. Mankind had known benevolence in fraternal orders, public charity, and the beautiful meaning of sacrificial friendship, but philanthropy, the love of man as man, the conception of personality in child or slave or woman or king as a priceless spiritual treasure, this is peculiarly the outcome of those faiths in the Fatherhood of God and in eternal life which made Jesus say, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own self?" Emerson is authority for the statement that "Jesus alone in history estimated the greatness of man."

Even when this principal emphasis of the Christian faith has been poorly apprehended, even when it has been mangled by gloomy theology or despoiled of its effect by ecclesiastical folly, it has exercised an incalculable influence on the characters of men. It has made those who deeply understood it feel that no sacrifice can be too great for the preservation of spiritual quality and the service of the personalities of other men. Self-respect, that inward

soul of the greatest motives for character, is by it raised to loftiest terms.

When, therefore, the opposite creed is asserted, how is it conceivable that motives and ideals of character shall not suffer a tremendous change? The denial of immortality leads a man by an inevitable drift toward the affirmation that we essentially are flesh, not spirit. When a man is asked if he has a soul, even though he is a Christian, he is likely to declare that he has one; and if it be inquired whether he has a body, he will doubtless assert that he has a body too. Such is our habit of colloquial speech, but even to casual thought how palpably absurd it is! Who is this third party, this holding corporation, this *tertium quid*, who on the one side owns a body and on the other side, a soul? A man is not so divided into three parts, one of which is possessor of the other two. A man has two aspects. One aspect of him is physical; it can be seen and touched, weighed and measured; its chemical constituents can be analyzed and reduced to formulæ. The other aspect of him is invisible, intangible; it cannot be weighed or measured; it is his world of loves,

hates, thoughts, ambitions ; in it are resident his sense of duty and his aspirations after God, and at the centre is that mystical, self-conscious memory, which survives the passage of the years, outlasts the building and break-down of the flesh and gives continuity to all his personal experience.

Concerning this strangely divided nature of man, the body and the soul, the central question upon whose answer all interpretation of life's meaning waits is this: Are we bodies that have spirits, or are we spirits that have bodies? Which is essentially the man? The Christian affirmation is not that we have souls, but that we are souls; that we substantially are spirit, as invisible as God, since no one ever saw himself or saw another man. The affirmation of the materialist is not that we have bodies, but that we are bodies; that flesh is the essence of us, and that all our intellectual and moral life, like the peal of a bell, is a transient result of physical vibrations, and ceases when the cause is stopped. Between these two affirmations the decision lies: either we are bodies that for a little time possess a spiritual aspect, or

else we are spirits using an instrument of flesh.

Long ago in an Athenian death-cell, where Socrates awaited the poisoned hemlock, this question was discussed. Some there compared man to a harp, and thought his intellectual and moral life the harmony that comes from the vibrating strings. Since, therefore, he essentially is the instrument, which gives being to the music, the music cannot outlast the destruction of the harp. But Socrates insisted that man is neither harp nor harmony; that he is a harper who plays upon the physical strings, dependent upon them for the quality of music he produces, but independent of them for his existence, since the player may leave one instrument and find another. So to-day the assertion of our immortality involves the faith that we are invisible, spiritual personalities; but belief in annihilation is coupled with the thought that we are the physical instruments, which, perishing, bring to an end the harmony they caused.

If we are thus transient beings, fundamentally physical, shall we long make the

great sacrifices which spiritual character demands? Does Ictinus pick out a quicksand on which to build the Parthenon and lavish on it there the genius of his art, knowing that every stroke of his mallet is making a beauty that to-day is and to-morrow will be gone? Does Raphael choose cotton cloth, whose slender and loosely woven fibres will hardly bear the strokes of his brush, on which to paint a Sistine Madonna? And will a man develop passionate moral enthusiasms and aspiring virtues on any other basis than spiritual permanence? The value of the object of sacrifice always determines the willingness of men to pay the cost, and immortality is that affirmation of the eternal worth of character which alone can make reasonable the devotion, aspiration and self-denial which great character requires. No man will work hard sewing diamonds on tissue paper.

V

If the devaluation of personality which inevitably follows the assertion that death ends all so affects the struggle for spiritual

quality in the individual, it must necessarily affect those enthusiasms for social service on which the future of philanthropy and democracy depends. Professor Hyslop can hardly be suspected of a prejudiced interest in evangelical theology; yet he affirms without qualification: "The ideals of democracy will live or die with the belief in immortality." His meaning clearly is that only moral permanence can furnish the necessary basis for those devotions which the perpetuation of democracy requires. If they are to be in earnest, men must feel when they invest their sacrifices in society that they are investing in a bank that will not fail.

To such a statement the reply continually is made that though the individual does die, humanity goes on, and that personal immortality has nothing to do with the continuance of those social causes which, persisting, may well come to their victory on earth, whether life beyond the grave be true or false. In May, 1865, a triumphal procession moved down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. The victors of a great war were coming home amid the accla-

mations of their fellow-citizens. But their comrades who had marched with them to the front, who had borne with them the danger and adventure of the great campaign, were lying buried under the sod at Antietam or at Gettysburg. So, say the men who cannot see the crucial import of immortality to social service, let us die, and some day the survivors of the war will celebrate a triumph for our cause and will gratefully remember our share in making the consummation possible. Noble as this exhortation is, it depends for its apparent validity upon a short look into the future. A long look negatives the force of its appeal. The polar ice-caps now hold undisputed sway over territory where, so scientists inform us, the most luxurious fauna and flora once were flourishing. Whether the planet tarries until the polar ice-caps seize it all, or whether some swifter cataclysm wrecks it, the earth is as temporary as any other sphere, that, slowly built out of spirals of revolving dust, in the end must disappear. The race is not immortal if the individuals are not. A limited succession of transient men does not make a permanent

society. A long look into the future does not show us a triumphant humanity, rejoicing because the war is over. In the end some solitary survivor of mankind must hold alone his triumphal procession down the Pennsylvania Avenue of the earth, and, if he can, cry "Victory" when he dies.

Without immortality, therefore, the long struggle of humanity has no consummation in which harmony comes at last out of the present discord of inequity. Behind all the labor of saints and martyrs has been the hope, held in innumerable forms, that some worthy end would crown their toil, that when Paul planted and Apollos watered, God would give the increase. In the old poem on the Battle of Blenheim, where little Peterkin climbs on Caspar's knee to hear the thrilling tale of brave fighting and bloody sacrifice, the boy interrupts the narrative to ask, "What good came of it at last?" That has always been humanity's question about life's battle, and one of the distinctive ministries of religious faith to social service has been the affirmation of a coming Kingdom, "toward which the whole creation moves,"

and in which justice shall at last be done. Some such hope is fundamental to undiscourageable social sacrifice.

Emerson, indeed, in the seclusion of his academic study may inveigh against thus appealing to the future for justice, against trusting the arbitrament of eternity to level the scales of judgment on sin, and may insist that with indefectible exactitude justice is rendered every hour. He may even affirm that the thief who steals silver steals more from himself than from the man he robs, since from his victim he pilfers only material wealth, while from himself he takes character. But when from the quiet of philosophic study into the thick of life we carry the idea that justice is done every hour, the assertion grows less clear and certain. The problem is not solved by balancing the theft of silver spoons against the despoiling of the thief's own character. When, rather, some Pharisee robs widows' houses and for a pretence makes long prayers, or some human beast sells girls to shame while still so young that they cry for their dolls, and when at last the despoilers grow fat, revel-

ling in their gain, while their victims starve in desolation or slay themselves to escape from their despair; if that is the finale of the matter, to be left there an enigma of injustice, it is impossible by any smooth words to cover the fact of utter inequity.

Striking and true though Emerson's figure be that we cannot have sin without immediate punishment, any more than we can have positive magnetism at one end of a needle without negative magnetism at the other, the analogy does not cover the case. When Roman soldiers take the loftiest soul that ever blessed the earth, and mock him, spit upon him, crown him with thorns and crucify him; when the scene ends with a scribe wagging his head and calling, "Save thyself," while from the cross the cry comes down, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" and when we believe that to be the last of the matter, scribe and Christ alike annihilated, and in a few æons their influence even, good or bad, brought inconsequentially to an end in the planet's dissolution, a profound injustice is there asserted which no glozing words can hide.

The demand for justice is not a cry for vengeance, nor, as Emerson suggests, a desire that the oppressed shall share at some future time the sort of pleasure in which their oppressors revelled here. The demand for justice requires that a solution shall be reached, in which the oppressors, brought to their senses by the reforming influence of punishment or by the conquering power of love, shall join with the oppressed, redeemed from their disasters, and that together both shall bear a part in some universal consummation that is adequate to explain and justify the strife and suffering of earth. Without that, reasonableness and justice, in any connotation known to man, cannot be affirmed of the world.

> "Right forever on the scaffold,
> Wrong forever on the throne,"

how all the vicarious servants of humanity bear witness to it! Only of a universe that preserves its moral gains, and resolves to harmony the dissonance of its inequities, can justice be asserted —

> "But that scaffold sways the future,
> And behind the dim unknown

Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above his own."

Without immortality all such hopeful outlook on the future becomes impossible. Society itself, then, has a limited existence. As another put it, the social task of humanity, with all its cost in blood and tears that righteousness may reign, is, from the standpoint of the everlasting ages, as unenduring as Michael Angelo's, when Pietro, the tyrant, commissioned him to scoop up snow in the Via Larga, and with painstaking art model a statue that before evening would melt in the Italian sun.

That this thought of the consummation of the long, sacrificial struggle of humanity, when it is fully and universally believed and understood, will blight the deepest incentives for social service, has been the fear even of those who were convinced that such a consummation is the inevitable end. Professor Goldwin Smith in a notable essay, published in 1904 in the *North American Review*, speaks frankly of his apprehension that when all men believe, as he does, that immortality is false, the soul of public-mindedness will die and the

great inspirations perish that have motived our social service and our passion for democracy. "A man of sense (disbelieving in immortality)," he concludes, "will probably be satisfied to let reforms alone, and to consider how he may best go through the journey of life with comfort and, if possible, with enjoyment to himself." Such is the testimony of a great man to the consequences of his own creed.

If it be asserted that the truth of immortality does not prevent a lamentable end to humanity's long, sacrificial toil, the answer is evident at once. The purpose of all social service is man's progress in character. The horrors of the white slave traffic, of tenements in city slums, and of corruption in city government, the evils of war and drunkenness and tyranny, all lie in this, that they debase, demoralize and in the end utterly ruin the characters of men. The exhaustless motive for philanthropy is not that we are toning down life's worst iniquities until our ultimate dissolution comes, but that we are altering the environments that are inimical to personal character, and that personal character is an eternal

matter, the one means by which the universe can preserve its moral gains. The infinite value of personality, which immortality asserts, makes any fight for social justice worth while.

When the modern man, therefore, is nonchalant about the affirmation or denial of a future life, he is nonchalant about all the deepest problems of humanity. The denial of immortality introduces us into a world where men are flesh with a transient spiritual aspect; where there are no permanent elements save the physical forces which build solar systems and destroy them; where earth throws away with utter carelessness its most precious treasures, never resolves to harmony the dissonance of its inequities and has no way of preserving its moral gains; where no eternal value in personality motives sacrifice for spiritual quality in the individual or furnishes basis for passionate and hopeful service to the race. If life eternal is not true, that is our world, and sooner or later men will find it out. To such a world we must accommodate ourselves as best we can, if immortality is false.

This plain issue to the creed of annihilation induces many a thoughtful man, who has traced to their last blind alley the hopes of humanity in a world where death ends all, to assert the truth of immortality, not because he can prove it, as he can the multiplication table or the expanding power of heat, but because he finds it necessary, as an adventure of faith, to make the universe reasonable.

CHAPTER II

The Possibility of Immortality

I

In spite of all that we have said about the nonchalance of modern men concerning life to come, the possibility of immortality is far more in question with many of them than is its significance. While they may not have traced through all its implications the meaning of annihilation, they have felt instinctively the difference that is involved for personal hope in the affirmation or denial of life to come. Facing their own death or enduring bereavement in the loss of others, they have found their apathetic attitude dissolved in grief and in unquenchable desire for hope; and when, in addition to this natural reaction in the presence of death, they come to see the baneful meaning for the whole of life involved in the creed that the grave ends all, they do not ask whether immortality makes a difference to

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life, but whether it is at all possible for their belief reasonably to follow their desire for immortality. Huxley, although he was agnostic concerning life to come, wrote to John Morley in 1883: "It flashes across me at all sorts of times with a sort of horror that in 1900 I shall probably know no more of what is going on than I did in 1800. I would sooner be in Hell a good deal, at any rate in one of the upper circles where the climate and company are not too trying. I wonder if you are plagued in this way." Sooner or later, either by personal experience of bondage to the fear of death or by insight into the sort of world which disbelief in immortality creates, most men reach the place where the possibility of believing in life to come is an urgent question with them.

When, therefore, we insist, as we have done, that the denial of personal permanence makes a vast difference to the whole meaning of human life, many a man will turn on us to say: "No one need tell me that the question of immortality involves great consequences for me now. I have stood beside my dead; I know. With increasing years

I have thought of my own mortality and have considered with what irreversible steps I walk to my certain end. It is not easy to think of my loves vanquished, my ideals unattained, my memory quite extinct, and I as though I had never been at all. At times I, too, have brooded over our race, its mysterious birth, its long travail, its strange fight with sin and circumstance, and have wondered whether it can be that in the end there will be nothing to show for all this struggle, aspiration, hope and sacrifice, except new worlds built from the ruins of the old, and in those new worlds no memory even of all that here was attempted, partially achieved, and at last utterly undone. No one need tell me that this makes a difference. I want to believe in immortality, but can I? Is immortality possible? What weighty arguments range themselves against it! Just because I want so to believe it, I will not sell my reason out to my desire. Show me that it is possible."

When one sets himself to answer this deeper question and endeavors clearly to discern whether the objections to belief

in immortality are conclusive, he faces at the beginning this impressive fact, that plenty of men to-day, thoroughly familiar with all arguments against faith in the world to come, and able to weigh their full significance, still cherish hopes, quite undismayed, of everlasting life. The fact that men like Sir Oliver Lodge in natural science, Professor William James in Psychology, Professor Hermann Lotze in Philosophy, Dr. William Osler in Medicine have thought it reasonable to cherish hopes of immortality, suggests at once that while immortality may not be proved, it certainly has not been disproved. It is evident in view of such men's faith that nothing which science or philosophy has ever discovered necessarily prevents a man from a reasonable hope of life to come. Personal permanence is possible.

This is well worth emphasizing because so often the reverse is urgently insisted on; because continually we are reminded that no satisfactory demonstration of life beyond the grave has ever yet been found. There are weighty considerations, positive and assuring, which can be adduced to strengthen hope in immortality, but in the

nature of the case it cannot be proved with the certainty of a mathematical proposition or with the verifiable accuracy of a scientific hypothesis concerning tangible affairs. This, every believer in the world to come must readily admit, but coupled with it is the companion fact that if men have found it difficult satisfactorily to prove immortality, they have found it absolutely impossible to disprove it. When Goldwin Smith concludes his essay in which he surrenders for himself all faith in life beyond the grave, he justly adds these closing sentences: "All this is said on the hypothesis that scientific scepticism succeeds in demolishing the hope of a future life. After all, great is our ignorance, and there may be something yet behind the veil." Many men to-day labor under the delusion that to the illumined and initiated man's mortality has now become a certain fact, and for the sake of such it needs to be affirmed that nobody, whose words are to be taken seriously, claims to have disproved life to come. Although there are many considerable objections, they are admittedly inconclusive.

One more preliminary matter, worth remarking, is that in the nature of the case we may well expect belief in immortality to be beset by countless difficulties. Granting that we are to live beyond the grave, is it to be supposed that we readily can conceive it possible? Must not our minds be thwarted in the attempt to understand the continuance of life under circumstances so alien from those in which life has always been experienced, and must not our imagination quite break down in the endeavor to conceive how thought and love can still persist, when the conditions which have made thought and love a possibility here have been removed? An unborn child, even though he were a philosopher, would have no easy time making clear to himself the facts of our earthly life. He lives without air; how can he live with it? He never saw light; how can he conceive it? He is absolutely dependent upon the cherishing environment in which he finds himself, and he cannot well imagine himself living without it. The crisis of birth would seem like death to an unborn child, if he could foresee himself wrenched from

all the conditions which have hitherto sustained his life. If in his unremembered embryonic days,

> "the days before
> God shut the doorways of his head,"

a man had philosophies of hope or hopelessness, they must have been strikingly like his scepticisms and his hardly cherished expectations, when now he dreams of life to come. So difficult must we expect to find the task of understanding the possibility of personality's continuance after death.

II

One difficulty in believing in life eternal does not arise from the nature of the case, but has been created for us by the ignorance, the dogmatism and the superstition of men. In how many minds is life beyond the grave so intimately associated with special ideas of the nature of the future world, that, by a lamentable *non sequitur*, men deny immortality because they can no longer hold their old ways of conceiving it! The setting is rejected and with it the diamond is thrown away. A cheap and easy method of arguing against life to come

is to insist upon some obsolete conception of heaven or hell, and then rail at so absurd a faith. The history of human thought upon the future world lends itself to such derision. There are terrible passages in Christian writers where the desire for vengeance, in most abhorrent forms, gives itself vent, the more unrestrained because the excuse of piety is present. "How shall I admire," cries Tertullian, "how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs and fancied gods groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates, who persecuted in the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than ever they kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red-hot flames, with their deluded scholars; so many celebrated poets trembling before the tribunal, not of Minos, but of Christ!" If immortality involves such a belief, then immortality cannot longer be considered seriously by any man of reasonable mind. We may well insist, therefore, that immortality may be true, and yet every form of thought in which mankind has hitherto conceived it may be false. Indeed,

when one considers how necessarily we use the symbols of our earthly life in every endeavor to portray the life to come; how in our loftiest flights of descriptive language we have streets of gold and gates of pearl, rivers of water and trees with healing leaves; how music itself, the most natural symbol of ecstasy, becomes so appallingly tedious when we conceive the joy of heaven in terms of it, that, as Doctor Jowett says, "To beings constituted as we are, the monotony of singing psalms would be as great an affliction as the pains of hell and might even be pleasantly interrupted by them"; when one considers the utter inconceivability of a world in which we have never been, whose circumstances by the necessity of the case are alien from anything that we can dream, it is not simply probable, it is inevitable, that all our thoughts of the future are more unlike the facts than a child's house of blocks is unlike the Taj Mahal. Wooden blocks and marble minarets are at least in the same plane of existence, but this world and the next are unimaginably different. No one but a charlatan pretends to know the circumstances of the world to come.

The best description of the future life yet written is to be found in the New Testament, "What eye hath not seen, what ear hath not heard, and what hath not entered into the heart of man."

The truth of immortality, therefore, does not depend upon the acceptance of any thoughts of it which ever have been believed by men. The tides are no less facts because mankind once thought that they were caused by a leviathan who swallowed up the sea and gulped it out again; nor are the eclipses a delusion because the Chinese beat tom-toms to scare the dragon that devours the sun. No truth depends upon the acceptance of man's inadequate ideas of it. The permanence of personality may involve the continued memory of all that has happened here on earth, or it may involve no more recollection than we have of our own embryonic days or of our earliest infancy. Our best imaginations of the soul's adventure, when through death we pass into another world, are surely all inadequate, perhaps so inadequate that not a detail of them is true, and yet immortality may be a fact, and the soul's adventure no delusion. No

objection to a future life, therefore, based upon aversion to some special conception of the nature of the world to come, can hold its ground.

III

Perhaps the most familiar difficulty in the way of belief in immortality is that appearances are against it. Whoever has seen a man grow gradually old, his mind failing as his body drooped, until, the mind a blank, the body slept itself away, understands the insistent argument of appearance against immortality. All that we can see dies, and because to us the most convincing evidence is the direct testimony of our senses, there is interposed between our minds and faith in personality's continuance the obstacle of looks. Our eyes bear witness to the dead and crumbling body; our ears bear witness to the fact that the voice is still; our hands bear witness that no longer can response be won, even by a hand clasp, to our most urgent and affectionate appeals. All our senses rise up and cry that our friend has perished. For most men, this simple fact is the greatest single difficulty in the way of faith.

This obstacle, however, even to casual thought is manifestly inconclusive. If we were to live by looks, we should live in grossest ignorance of all the most important facts, not only of the spiritual, but of the physical world. The sun looks as though it were moving, but it is not; the earth looks as though it were flat, when it is round, and as though it were standing still, when it is moving over a thousand miles a minute. At noon the stars seem to be gone, but they are there. Put a straight stick in a calm pool and it appears to be crooked, while it still is straight. Put a blue glass upon one eye and a yellow glass upon the other and, going into a white room, you will see it all as green. All progress in knowledge of the physical universe has been won through criticism of the senses' testimony, by going behind the way things look to the way things are.

When first the new astronomy proposed its revolutionary conception of the world, endeavoring to persuade men of a spherical earth describing ellipses about the sun, the traditional view took refuge in manifest appearance, as in an impregnable citadel.

Said Melanchthon, in condemnation of Copernicus, "The eyes are witnesses that the heavens revolve in the space of twenty-four hours. But certain men, either from love of novelty or to make a display of ingenuity, have concluded that the earth moves." All men of common sense arose in contemptuous certainty to assert the plain evidence of sight. So persistent is the power of appearance over the minds of men that even within the last half century the old arguments have been countless times presented, in a famous sermon, to applauding audiences. In the morning the sun is on one side of the house, said the preacher, and in the afternoon it is on the other side, and since the house has not moved, the sun has. So valuable is the argument of looks. The substitution of judgment for sight, of verified realities for the appearance of things, is an achievement involved with every step of progress in the knowledge of the world.

No more in physical science than in the search for spiritual truth, may a man walk by sight; he must walk by insight. Sight says that a man grows smaller as he recedes

into the distance; insight says he does not. Sight sees only unconnected series of events; insight perceives governing laws, dominant and irreversible. Sight sees a flat earth, circled by planets, and all that science teaches does not change the looks one whit; but insight knows that all the looks are false. So universal is this criticism of sight by insight that the presumption always is that the superficial appearance of anything is inadequate or quite untrue. The analogy of all our other knowledge would be fulfilled, if sight said that man dies and insight declared that he lives beyond the grave.

This general consideration gains point for our problem, when we perceive that, granting the truth of immortality, it stands to reason that we cannot see the truth with our physical eyes. In a great observatory, when the clock that moves the telescope in time with the movement of the earth chances to stop, it is possible to see the earth go round. For then the stars and planets in a stately march move across the face of the lens, and as one watches, the truth of insight is made clear even to physical

vision. By such ingenuity of invention can the movement of the earth be seen, but who can hope by any means to carry the function of the eye out of the realm where it properly belongs, and expect it to bring him witness of the life to come? Save possibly in the realm of psychic investigation, he must admit the utter inapplicability of sight to the problem of immortality. The only valuable testimony in any mooted matter is the testimony of those powers of perception and of understanding which are appropriate to the case in hand. The truth of immortality is a matter of thought not of appearance, of reason not of looks; the organ of perception fitted to deal with immortality is the mind and not the eye. Looks, therefore, are an utterly inconclusive argument, and he who disbelieves immortality because of appearances is essentially in the same intellectual class as the young child, who, after the fashion of Alice in Wonderland, supposes that folks really grow small or large in proportion to their distance from the eye of the beholder, because it looks that way.

IV

Another obstacle in the way of accepting immortality, not so common as the foregoing, but full of impressiveness for many minds, is the lowly origin of man's belief in the future world. A primitive savage, safely housed in his home village, goes forth in dreams at night to visit hunting-grounds or to wage war in countries far removed from the place where his body lies. How inevitable, then, is his assumption that he has a soul, separable from his body, which can leave the house of flesh at will, traverse great distances and return again! Such, says Herbert Spencer, is the lowly origin of the idea of soul. To many it is a disconcerting thought that man's belief in his invisible self takes its rise so superstitiously in an assumption which now is negatived by the psychology of sleep. And even more disconcerting is it when, upon this basis, the rise of belief in immortality is circumstantially described. For when the primitive savage loses his chief in battle, and on the very night after the funeral sees in his dreams the honored

warrior return, hears him speak and speaks to him in answer, how inevitable is the assumption that the soul, absent from the body in death as in sleep, still exists and possesses the powers which here belonged to it! Therefore, among all primitive people, the abode of the dead was definitely imagined, and from that place of shadows the friends who had gone came back in dreams to warn and counsel their descendants. To the North American Indian the abode of the dead was a happy hunting-ground away in the west; to the Maori it lay at the base of a great precipice; to the Finns and Australians the dead inhabited a distant island; to the Polynesians they dwelt in the moon; to the Mexicans and Peruvians in the sun; and, most popular idea of all, to the ancient Teutons, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and Hebrews a subterranean cavern, from which mysterious, well-guarded passages led to the surface of the earth, was the destination of the dying. From these residences, the shades of the deceased could sometimes be summoned as the Witch of Endor summoned Samuel; from them resurrections oftentimes occurred, with which the

records of all religions are replete; and continually in dreams the living were counseled by the dead. Such, say the anthropologists, is the origin and early history of man's belief in immortality. Among all people everywhere such ideas of a future world have arisen, and all our hopes of immortality are the lineal descendants of these early superstitious dreams. "It is true," says Max Müller, "and I believe has never been contested, that even the lowest savages now living possess words for body and for soul. If we take the Tasmanians, a recently extinct race of savages, we find that, however much different observers may contradict each other as to their intellectual faculties and acquirements, they all agree that they have names for soul and souls; nay, that they all believe in the immortality of the soul." What confidence can we place in a faith that has arisen among all primitive savages through the mistaking of dreams for realities?

It is true, to be sure, that there are many differences of opinion among scholars regarding this fascinating story of man's growing belief in immortality, but it is clear

that along some path, however hard now to trace, we must follow the faith of man in life eternal back to lowly origins. Although like a butterfly, with gorgeous wings, our hope may now be free to fly, it was once a crawling worm. Of that, the facts of history, the evidences of literature and custom, the testimony of psychology definitely assure us. The reasons on account of which mankind first began to believe in life beyond the grave are reasons that we would count the grossest superstitions. When, however, this patent fact is urged, as in many minds it is, as a cause for distrusting immortality, how clearly inconclusive the objection is! All things have a lowly origin. Conscience itself which so imperiously commands us now; capacity for thought by which our scientific investigations are themselves made possible; all our faculties and endowments have lowly origins. Are ethical ideals to be evalued, and their validity to be determined, in the light of the earliest stages of them which can be discovered? Though each stage in the development of ethical responsibility be exquisitely traced, until

from the most rudimental form of moral feeling to the loyalty of Savonarola or the patient self-sacrifice of Lincoln not a fibre is missing in the reconstruction of the process, the real problem has not thus been touched. Can a man explain an oak by tracing it back into the acorn? Does he not rather have the task of explaining how an acorn came to be an undeveloped oak? The interpretation of any process must be sought in its issue, not in its genesis, for the outcome only makes manifest what was involved in the germ. Therefore, could the most rudimental moral consciousness be discovered, its appreciation must always be in terms of that imperious sense of obligation, which was inherent in it and which now, developed from it, has become the chiefest concern of the world. No tracing of origins can effect the real significance of anything. We do not judge the man by the embryo; we judge the embryo by the man.

When we perceive that with the first dawning of intelligence men question about the sun, whether it is the same orb to-day that was here yesterday, or is some different body created anew daily by the gods, we

do not, because this is the beginning of astronomy, rule out of court our Galileos and Keplers, taunting them with the aboriginal beginnings of their science. Rather we watch with pride the dawning mind of man, dimly perceiving problems on which the intelligence of the wisest of the race shall yet exert itself, and vaguely reaching for solutions, which, however primitive, are prophetic of centuries of growing knowledge. When cathedrals are outlawed because our aboriginal ancestors built only straw huts; when Bach and Mozart are laughed at because early music was coaxed from conch-shells or beaten sticks; when poetry and love, science and education, are railed at because of their crude origins, — then man's faith in immortality may tremble before the undeveloped ways in which the earliest men we know conceived it. We must not compel larks to live under water because their forefathers were fishes.

V

The doctrine of evolution has its more discouraging effect on man's belief in immortality, not when it traces the rise in the

human mind of faith in the future world, but when it traces the rise of the human mind itself. When science discloses to us a vast physical universe, unfolding in unimaginable ways through age-long cosmic changes, and, in one corner of this immeasurable expanse, puts man upon a world so small that its total conflagration would be invisible to the strongest telescope upon the nearest star, it prepares us for a disparagement of man that makes his ultimate annihilation seem entirely reasonable. An angel commissioned by God to discover the earth amid the innumerable hosts of stars, says an astronomer, would be like a child sent out upon a vast prairie, to find a speck of sand at the root of some blade of grass. When on this insignificant planet science pictures a process of growth that has lifted inorganic matter into organic life, has moved organic life from plants through ascending series of animal forms to the erect mammals, and has at last raised this organic life in man to the functions of thought and speech and character, science, so emphasizing our kinship with the brutes and our personalities' intimate dependence

on our physical structure, has made immortality seem to multitudes utterly impossible. Here we face an objection to faith in the future life, in comparison with which the obstacles which we have hitherto considered are superficial. Man is a lineal descendant of the beasts; as they are dependent on their bodies for life and all its functions, so is he; and his capacity for thought, however far-ranging and exalted, has grown like a blossom out of that wonderfully organized stalk, his brain. Such is the picture which in many minds to-day creates an insuperable objection to faith in immortality.

In mitigation of the effect of this idea of man's origin, it is worth noting that the evolution of the race does not create a single difficulty in the way of believing in a self, separable from the body, that is not really present in the evolution of each individual. Whatever may be the facts about the race, every one of us evolved from a primal cell. All the mystery of the race's origin, and all the difficulties in the way of believing in an immortal self, are present in the familiar facts of each man's develop-

ment from his conception to his maturity. From an original cell, through the complicated building of physical structure, until at last the capacity for thought emerges, and personality is slowly gained as the brain is organized, — such is the life-story of each individual and of the race. In any text-book on theology one will find the possibility of a separable soul discussed, in view of the evolution not of the race but of the individual. Four theories have been advanced to explain the presence of the spiritual element in man, and its relationship with his growing physical organism: that the soul is preëxistent, and that when the body is prepared the soul inhabits it; that God creates the soul complete and places it in a body prepared for its residence; that soul and body together grow, the first developing as the second gives it opportunity; and last, that the body creates the soul and functions mentally on one side as it does physically upon the other. Such are the speculations with which men have endeavored to explain the mysterious coordination of mind and brain. "When did the race become immortal?" asks the

materialist in derision, as he points out the imperceptible gradations by which animal existence has passed into human life. But that same question has always been applicable to the growing embryo or the newborn babe. When does any man become immortal? Such difficulties, immense and elemental, are all present in the plain fact of each individual's growth from a primal cell, and the evolution of the race adds not a single essential factor to the problem. The gradual development of all mankind from lowly forms of life simply presents in general the same question which in particular the mind of man has always faced, when he has considered the relation of his invisible self to his mysteriously evolving body.

When, therefore, we grant all that scientists affirm concerning the evolution of the race, we are facing the same elemental facts, in the light of which immortality has always been discussed. Personality and body, whether in single men or in mankind as a whole, grow in intimate correlation. They mutually condition each other. The wisdom of the sage is not expected in a

child because the brain is not yet organized to make it possible, and in the newly born we know that there is nothing to be looked for save capacity for sensation and response to simple outward stimuli. Some form of mutual dependence exists between the mind and brain, and upon the nature of that dependence rests the possibility of immortal life. Does the organization of the brain produce personality, or does personality endeavor to express itself through brain? The effect of the doctrine of evolution upon the problem of immortality is simply to drive home with more urgent emphasis the ancient question upon the answer to which belief in life everlasting always waits: what is the nature of the mind's dependence upon the brain?

Indeed, so far are the facts of racial evolution from being conclusive against life to come, that many of our most scholarly and thoughtful men have found in the implications of evolution a strong argument for immortality. The manifest trend of the whole creative process is toward the building of personality. The story of humanity's evolving life, traced backward from the

present toward the unknown beginnings, presents a record of successive derivations from forms of existence ever simpler and less complicated ; but the same story traced from the remotest origins onward toward to-day, presents a record of ascent, in which all physical changes seem to be intended for a psychical result. God in evolution no less than in Genesis, appears to be taking the dust of the earth, and breathing into it the breath of life until man becomes a living soul. If a man insists that there is no purpose in the universe at all, that the entire process means nothing, he must do it now not alone in the face of an opposing theology, but in the face of an evolutionary science which presents an ascending series of physical forms, ending with a being in whom evolution has changed from progress in physical structure to growth in intelligence and character. If, on the other hand, a man believes that the universe means anything, he must, in the light of manifest facts, believe that it has been aiming at personality. If, then, the entire labor of the universe, culminating in spiritual persons, is to be thrown away and nothing

come of it, we indeed are "put to permanent intellectual confusion." Such considerations as this have made evolution the strong ally of belief in immortality to many minds. At least it is evident that the facts of evolution are not conclusive against immortality. Professor Fiske, one of America's leading evolutionists, states the truth with less restraint. "The materialistic assumption," he says, "that the life of the soul ends with the life of the body, is perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy."

VI

We come, therefore, in our discussion of the possibility of life beyond the grave, to that difficult question in which all other objections to immortality have their culmination: is not the mind absolutely dependent on the brain? Not the evolutionary doctrine, but the modern laboratory study of the physical basis of personality, most urges this query on us. There is no longer any doubt about the facts to be interpreted. A continuous layer of gray matter, varying

in thickness from one-twelfth to one-eighth of an inch, and folded upon itself "as one would crumple up a handkerchief," forms the outer surface of our brains. No thinking is ever done by men without the coöperation of this delicate and highly organized nervous tissue. Each psychical function has some special lobe or convolution in the gray matter, without which the corresponding mental activity is utterly impossible. In many cases the exact location of the sensitive surface, where the special forms of intellectual activity are carried on, is known to the psychologists. They know the area in the brain with which we hear, the area with which we see; they know the lobes by which we move our arms and legs, our lips and tongues and eyes; they know the convolution where the function of speech is carried on and without which abstract thinking is impossible. They can even distinguish the surface with which we hear words from the surface with which we read them. Nothing is clearer than that for every functioning of the minds of men there is a corresponding molecular activity in the gray matter of the brain. The con-

clusion at first seems inevitable, that the mind is absolutely dependent on the physical structure and is inseparable from it.

It is well to note that as the doctrine of racial evolution only makes more urgent a problem always faced by those who watched the development of any individual, so here the discoveries of physiological psychology only assert with greater particularity and assurance what is the common experience of every man. We know that we are dependent on our brains. Every fever that congests our nervous systems; every paralytic stroke that attacking the right hemisphere of the brain cripples the left side of the body; every illness that reduces our power of thought by disabling the machinery with which our thinking must be done, says in popular speech what the psychologists assert in scientific terms, that we are dependent on our brains. When a good character is altered by a blow upon the skull, and is restored again by surgeons who trephine the bone and relieve the pressure upon the convolution underneath, that fact only makes more vivid and explicit what every ordinary man has known, that

the healthy condition of his nervous system is prerequisite to a healthy personality. The essential problem has not been altered by the modern discoveries of the physiological investigators; it has only been made more manifest, more circumstantial and more urgent. The intimate relationship between the mind and the brain has been so illustrated in detail, so proved by experiments verifiable and clear, that the modern man has come to say with a definiteness and an assurance which his own experience never would have wrought in him, that his personality is absolutely dependent on his brain. How can we be separable selves, when we and our nervous systems are so intermeshed and apparently indissoluble?

Our initial fear that the dependence of our minds upon our brains must conclusively banish the hope of immortality is mitigated somewhat when we turn to books, such as Doctor Thompson's work on "Brain and Personality." Here is a man who knows the facts, and in the elucidation of them and the practice of the inferences drawn from them, has played no inconsiderable part. So far, however, is he from

being convinced that they imply the annihilation of a man at death, that to him the details of the brain's organization and the way in which the centres of psychical functioning are built up in the gray matter of its surface, seem clearly to indicate, not that the brain makes the person, but that the person is using the brain as his instrument and is educating it to serve his will. If the gray matter made the person, he argues, the more gray matter the more possibility of personal power. But on the contrary, not only are many of the greatest minds associated with brains of less than medium weight, but in every brain only one hemisphere is used for thinking, as one eye may be used for seeing, so that a paralytic stroke may utterly destroy one hemisphere, and the man still think on as clearly as he thought before. The gray matter does not make the person, he asserts, the person organizes a small portion of the gray matter, and uses it as an instrument for thinking. However one may disagree with special aspects of this argument, or however one may be unable to comprehend the argument at all, when one considers the eminent

investigators whose knowledge of the facts is comprehensive and exact, and whose hope of immortality is yet unshaken, he sees that there must be a possible interpretation of the mind's dependence on the brain, which does not necessarily negative the hope of life eternal.

That the present contingency of a living being upon a physical structure does not by itself argue that such a relationship must exist forever, is clear. The worm in the cocoon, or the babe in the womb, or the bird in the egg, depends on the warm and nourishing environment in which he is enclosed, and with which he is connected by ties that condition the possibility of his existence. But this present relationship is not permanent. A life is being wrought in the temporary matrix which some day will outgrow the old necessities. Such an analogy is no argument at all for the immortality of man, but it is a clear disclosure of the fact that the absolute dependence of life upon a physical structure may be of such a nature that the dependence is a temporary preparation for a future independence.

This suggestion is entirely pertinent to the problem of man's future life. The present contingency of mind on brain negatives the hope of immortality only under one condition: that the brain creates the mind. If the man's invisible self is conditioned by his physical structure as the blossom is by its stalk and cusp, then his annihilation is assured; but what if the dependence of his personality upon his nervous system were like the dependence of a telegrapher upon his instruments? Every fact known to science is at least as satisfactorily explained by the latter idea as by the former. In either case any injury to the physical structure means a corresponding disability to the life that is dependent on it for its expression. A man cannot see without eyes, but the eyes are not the man; he cannot see without the optic nerve, but the nerve is not the man; he cannot see without the visual lobe of the brain, but the lobe is not the man. Why are they not alike instruments which the man uses, upon which his present activities are contingent, but apart from which he can still exist? For all that any investigation ever

has ascertained, such may be the case. Science has discovered only that for every activity of the mind there is a corresponding molecular change in the brain, and that is equally true whether we regard the brain as an agent that creates the mind, or as an instrument on which the mind is playing.

If a man is riding in his limousine, he is dependent on the windows for his impression of the outside world. If the glass is covered by curtains or besmeared with mud, he cannot see. All that happens to the windows affects his power either to receive impressions from without or to signal to his friends. Yet the man is not thereby proved to be the glass, nor is it clear that he may not some day leave his limousine and see all the better because the old mediums are now discarded. A man's dependence on his instruments can never be used to prove that he is his instruments or is created by them. Every man who is acquainted with the exact discoveries of physiological psychology, understands that they leave the question of immortality where they found it, unanswered still. Science is sure that thought and the brain's activity now go

hand in hand; but whether the brain is the creator of the mind or is simply the temporary instrument of mind, must be determined by considerations with which the physiological laboratory cannot deal. All objections to eternal life, based upon the present dependence of the mind upon the body, are admittedly inconclusive. "How much does this argument amount to," asks Professor Fiske, "as against the belief that the soul survives the body? The answer is, Nothing! absolutely nothing! It not only fails to disprove the validity of the belief, but it does not raise even the slightest prima facie presumption against it."

VII

Many men compelled by the testimony of the experts and the obvious evidence of the facts, to acknowledge that even this strongest argument against immortality is indecisive, take final refuge, as an explanation of their disbelief, in the inconceivable mysteriousness of an invisible self using a visible body. The unimaginable nature of such a relationship between the

mind and brain urges them to deny its possibility. Granted that, as a matter of theory, science never has proved, and in the nature of the case never can prove, the indissoluble connection between the body and the self; yet the ties that bind the two are so obviously close and intimate that one cannot easily conceive them torn asunder. A disembodied self is an unpicturable thing. What I would be without my instruments of perception and my nervous organism, is beyond my power to apprehend, and what is unimaginable can only with difficulty be believed. But if the brain conceived as the instrument of personality is an enigma, what is the mystery of the brain, conceived as the creator of personality! That is the alternative. Either mind uses brain or is produced by it. If our physical structure is not the instrument on which we play, our physical structure is our originator, and we are creatures whose builder and maker is brain. If, therefore, the difficulty of conceiving a mind that uses gray matter as a means of thinking seems insuperable, it is well to face the alternative, and see the mystery

which we necessarily prefer when we, denying that personality uses flesh, thereby assert that flesh produces personality. How much less mysterious is gray matter creating mind, than is mind making an instrument of gray matter?

The lobe of the brain with which the function of thought is associated is made up of a definite number of physical cells, reticulated by innumerable nervous avenues of communication. How can these cells be pictured as conspiring to write "Hamlet" or to compose the sonatas of Beethoven? Has each cell a mental aspect? If each cell has, how can it communicate its mental power, and arrange with its neighbors so to contribute theirs, that altogether they shall produce an Emancipation Proclamation or a determination to die on Calvary rather than be untrue? The thing is inconceivable. It is not the brain as a whole that is associated with thinking; it is a special lobe in one hemisphere of the brain; and because that lobe is compounded of distinguishable cells, the function of the lobe must be a sum made up of the functions of the parts. In the

last analysis, therefore, we have a single cell, made out of subtile matter and infinitesimally minute, and in the physical vibration of this cell and others like it, lies the potency that has written all our literature, achieved all our knowledge, composed all our music, dreamed all our ideals, and attained all our spiritual character. How incredible a mystery is this!

It is sufficiently strange that man should build a violin and play upon it, but that a violin should fortuitously build itself, organize its atoms, shape its body and make taut its strings, and then with no one to play upon it, should play upon itself Joachim's "Hungarian Concerto," how shall a man make that seem reasonable? Just such an unimaginable thing must one believe, who asserts that brain creates the mind. This affirmation of materialism is the one unbelievable mystery. A "mobile cosmic ether," as Haeckel calls it, that can arrange itself into mothers and music and the laughter of children at play: a "mobile cosmic ether" that can compose itself into Isaiah and Jesus and Livingston and Phillips Brooks; a "mobile cosmic ether" that can organize

itself into the Psalms of David and the dramas of Shakespeare, into Magna Chartas and Declarations of Independence; what intellectual gymnastics must a man perform to make such a process thinkable? And this materialistic explanation of personality nowhere appears so incomprehensible as when from vague generalities like Haeckel's ether it is driven to the plain assertion that a visible, ponderable, gray tissue with its little cells is the transient creator of all the character and intelligence of the race. If one desires to avoid mystery, he does ill to deny that mind uses brain, in order that he may assert that brain creates mind.

Indeed, the consequences of affirming that flesh, however finely organized, is the producer of personality, are far wider than the comparatively insignificant matter of mystery. Everything physical always tends to act along the path of least resistance. In a world, therefore, where mind is the creature of nervous organization, when a man asserts a universal truth, such as that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line joining them, he

is not saying this because it is true, but because the molecules of his brain always find that the path of least resistance leads them to function towards such an affirmation. If truth is thus a matter of the physical paths of least resistance in the brain, one can readily understand the suspended judgment of the man, of whom Macaulay tells, who was inclined to think that parallel lines would never meet, but who would not be dogmatic on the subject. A man may well suspend his judgment on every axiom, if axioms are simply nervous discharges along lines of least resistance. This unaccountable enigma confronts us in a world where mind is made by brain, that everybody who can think at all believes that three times three make nine. How did it happen in a universe where no one ever thought this truth until man thought it, that the material substance of human brains has so organized itself that it always finds the path of least resistance leading to this conclusion? For in such a world, all truth, as well as all beauty and goodness, is reduced to a question of brain avenues and cellular functions. When Haydn com-

posed "The Creation," saying, "Not from me, but from above it all has come," he was mistaken about the source of his inspiration, for the fact was that his gray matter had merely executed a neurosis along the lines of least resistance in the brain; when John Napier discovered the process of logarithms, it was because his unusually agile brain cells achieved a fortunate manœuvre whereby they reached an unforeseen result; and when Latimer, burning at the stake in Oxford Square, said to his companion in martyrdom, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out," the cause was that by a happy conspiracy among the molecules in his Brocca convolution, they had succeeded in pooling their psychical aspects and producing the heroic words. Perhaps most strange of all, the hope of immortality itself, that has made men die singing, that has inspired poems like "In Memoriam" and music like Christendom's Easter hymns and anthems, and that into the commonplace endurance of innumer-

able humble men has put cheer and courage, is at bottom nothing but an explosion of excitable nerve cells. This interpretation of the beauty, knowledge, goodness and faith of mankind cannot be disproved. As Paulsen says, "The proposition that thoughts are in reality nothing but movements in the brain, that feelings are nothing but bodily processes in the vaso-motor system, is absolutely irrefutable; not because it is true, however, but because it is meaningless. The absurd has this advantage in common with truth, that it cannot be refuted." At any rate, the old fable of the fish that leaped from the frying-pan into the fire, because the pan was hot, is a mild simile for the estate of the man who gives up belief in immortality and accepts its alternative, because immortality is mysterious. One is reminded, in this wild attempt to escape mystery, of George Sand's character, Gribouille, "who threw herself into the river at the approach of rain, for fear of getting wet!"

When thus a man has canvassed all the standard objections to belief in personal permanence, he finds them manifestly incon-

clusive. So far as anything that science has discovered is concerned, immortality is as possible as it is significant. The assurance of its truth must rest on considerations that overpass the boundaries of scientific investigation, but when the stream of a human life turns the great bend in its banks which we call death, and passes out of sight, there is no fact known to man which negatives our right to seek those further reasons which may assure us that the stream flows on.

CHAPTER III

The Assurance of Immortality

I

The bare possibility that after death we may continue to exist falls far short of satisfying the interest of men in immortality. There may be some, indeed, whose desires for life eternal are so strong that when the arguments against it are proved inconclusive, their hearts, like coiled springs released, leap out in confident affirmation that the possible is true. Such an attitude is not altogether unreasonable, for when a great life, pulsating with energy and hope, burdened with powers but half-expressed, aspiring with a reach that is larger than its grasp, suddenly passes from our sight, the responsibility of proof seems to rest with those, who, in the face of mankind's universal hope, assert that the life has been annihilated. If, therefore, such proof is quite impossible, if all the nooks and crannies of the mental universe hide not a single fact

that demonstrates the dissolution of the personality, a man may well feel the strong presumption of probability that the life goes on. More cautious minds, however, will not be greatly influenced by this consideration. If the bare possibility of life eternal is all that they can affirm, their resultant attitude will be not positive confidence but agnosticism. However much they may desire to be convinced of immortality, they will feel themselves in honor bound not to go beyond the evidence.

Moreover, the bare possibility that man may live through death is insufficient, because the profoundest meanings which faith in immortality possesses for the lives of men cannot belong to one who, perceiving that existence beyond the grave is possible or even probable, is yet not positively convinced that it is true. If belief in personal permanence concerned only a mysterious future, uncertainty about it would be of no great moment, and the possibility of its truth might serve most of the needs which could be met by confident assurance. Life beyond the grave, however, is not an artificial addition to this present existence,

but a natural continuation of it; if a man is immortal at all, he is immortal now. Eternal life, to those who are destined to live forever, is not a possession conferred at death, but a present endowment, the full appreciation of which incalculably deepens, beautifies and solemnizes the meaning of our most common days. For if a man is immortal, he now has entered on an endless course of spiritual growth with limitless possibilities latent in it; he has now begun a journey in which death is an incident, a life story which the grave will simply punctuate to more exalted meaning. If this faith in life eternal as a present possession is to be so apprehended that it will make a vital difference to character, if a man to-day is to take advantage of the comforts, sanctions, motives and hopes which properly belong to an immortal personality, until, aware that he is deathless, he begins now to live the kind of life that it will be worth his while to live forever, immortality must be to him not a probability but an assured conviction. Confident belief in immortality is important for this fundamental reason, that upon it depends

the practice of immortality now. No man will really live as though he were an eternal person until he is assured that such an interpretation of his life is true.

Now, when a man seeks positive and assuring reasons for faith in personal permanence, he may well be discouraged at the beginning by the unanimity with which men agree, sometimes triumphantly and sometimes reluctantly, that immortality cannot be proved. To be sure, some psychic investigators, with more or less confidence, assert that they have held communion with the dead. Facts which suggest spiritual intercourse between the other world and this, and which have been impressive enough tentatively to convince Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, and men of like scientific temperament and training, may not cavalierly be laughed out of court, but such evidence is too difficult of access, too dubious at present in its implications, to assure any considerable number of people that the world to come is true. It may be that great light will break upon us from this quarter, and that, as Frederick Myers prophesied, a few generations hence

it will be impossible for any man to doubt the appearances of Jesus to his disciples after Calvary, but at present, the evidence, whether of our own immortality or of the Master's, must move for most men in a realm quite other than that of psychic phenomena. There are, to be sure, multitudes, who take their faith in immortality, without evidence, on the dictum of an external authority, but such a credulous attitude is increasingly impossible. If the assertion of immortality in book and church cannot find positive support in discoverable facts, mankind's conviction of its truth will surely wane. Men to-day demand proof. Because, therefore, belief in immortality seems to be amenable to no scientific processes of thought, and to allow no verifiable confirmation, man's faith in it naturally tends to grow unsure, to become a tentative and uncertain hope, until at last the future world for him pales into a dim possibility.

II

The common statement, therefore, that immortality cannot be proved, must be sub-

jected to searching analysis. As a matter of fact, it is untrue that the assertion of immortality and the assertion of a scientific law involve radically different intellectual processes, and the popular idea that they do is based upon an utter misunderstanding of the methods which scientists continually employ. The fundamental assumption of all science is that the universe is truly a universe, consistent in its regularity of procedure, not erratic and whimsical, but uniform, dependable and law-abiding. Without this faith, which never has been and never can be fully demonstrated, science would be impossible. Huxley calls himself an agnostic with reference to God's being and character, but in regard to the consistency and regularity of the universe he could not be agnostic and still be a scientist. He must make that leap of faith, and he makes it with gladness and confidence. "As for the strong conviction," he says, "that the cosmic order is rational, and the faith that, throughout all duration, unbroken order has reigned in the universe, I not only accept it, but I am disposed to think it the most important of all truths." Exactly!

Than this there are few more amazing ventures of faith for a man to make, and yet this lies at the basis of all science. For this assumption that the universe always has been and always will be a reasonable and law-abiding whole, is, in the nature of the case, not amenable to complete verification. So many confirming facts, however, indicate, and within limited spheres strictly demonstrate, the dependableness of nature, that the assertion of a universal cosmic order is a reasonable conviction, as certain as it is supremely important. Men discovered the laws of the ellipse and found afterwards that the planets in their courses observe them perfectly. The chemical conditions and qualities of fire, whether on earth or in the stars, are found to be identical. In special sciences the dependableness of nature is so completely verified that the exultant assertion of a professor in chemistry is readily transferred to the whole cosmic order: "Ask nature the same question in the same way, and she will always give you the same answer." The universe is everywhere amenable to thought; it can be understood;

it is trustworthy, not capricious, — this is the conviction which, proved in segments, is confidently affirmed as the faith of science concerning the entire cosmic process.

A notable consequence is involved in this affirmation that the universe is rational. What does this assertion mean, if not that the world acts as it might be expected to act, had it been thought through by Mind. When Charles Darwin exclaims, "If we consider the whole universe, the mind refuses to look at it as the outcome of chance," he is saying that the cosmic process is rational and that nothing rational ever comes by accident. Reasonableness is the work of mind. Can a man read sense into a printed page that bears the impress of type which, haphazard, has pied itself? Type must express previous thought before any man can discover thought there. When, therefore, as Darwin says, the mind refuses to believe that the planets accidentally arranged themselves, and that the story of evolving human life comes from the pied type of a fortuitous creation, we are compelled to the alternative, that the cosmic order has

reasonableness inherent in it, discovered, not created by the thought of man. The only way we have of asserting the reasonableness of the world involves the assertion that the world has been thought through, that there is mind behind it and in it, that it did not come by chance, and that the human mind studying it, discovers thought already there. When Kepler, sweeping the heavens with his telescope, cried: "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee," he was affirming the logical result of believing that the universe is rational.

Because science starts with this fundamental assumption of the cosmic order's rationality, it goes on to affirm as true all propositions, whether they can be completely verified or not, that are necessary to make intelligible and reasonable the facts of experience. The scientist notes the facts first, and then makes a venture of faith, which in ordinary parlance is concealed under various names,—doctrine, as in the "doctrine of evolution," law, as in the "law of gravitation," theory, as in the "theory of electrons," — but all of which have this in common, that they are science's

attempts to frame a proposition that will make intelligible and reasonable the facts of experience. Every statement of scientific law is a venture of faith in disguise as a hypothesis. The Copernican astronomy was at first a sublime guess, and the conservation of energy, still incapable of universal proof, was an enormous assumption, but since without them the data of the physical world are not understandable, they are confidently affirmed as true. "He who does not go beyond the facts," says Huxley, "will seldom get as far as the facts"; and even Haeckel adds, "Scientific faith fills the gaps in our knowledge of natural laws with temporary hypotheses." Take away this privilege of faith, and from the foundation to the topmost pinnacle the elaborate structure of science falls apart into unrelated, inchoate elements. As the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology expresses it, "Science is grounded in faith just as is religion, and scientific truth, like religious truth, consists of hypotheses, never wholly verified, that fit the facts more or less closely."

Without the exercise of faith, therefore,

the world of knowledge would be reduced to factual elements, disparate and unorganized by law, a topsy-turvy jumble of units without sequence or relation. But even this sort of world is too rich and copious to be obtained without faith. Indeed, let a man once begin to be a thoroughgoing agnostic, to refuse utterly to go beyond the facts, and he speedily reduces the universe to absurdity. To believe at all in the existence of an outer world or in the reality of other persons is a gigantic venture of confidence. To trust as veracious one's sensations of things and people is prerequisite to thinking that things and people exist at all, so that if by proof is meant the achievement of undoubtable certainty, Tennyson's sage is strictly correct:

"Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
Thou canst not prove the world thou movest in,
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one:
Thou canst not prove that thou art immortal, no,
Nor yet that thou art mortal — nay, my son,
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven."

Indeed, such unmitigated scepticism, not to be evaded except by faith in those perceptions which assure us of an outer world of things and persons, forces us even to disbelieve our own identity. That I myself am the same person whose experiences are transmitted in the flow of my memory is an unprovable conviction. My recollection is assumed for true on faith, and my sense of personal identity is the result of trust in the veracity of my remembrance. If a man decides to have done with faith, from its largest and most comprehensive exercise to its most simple functioning, this vast and complicated world will be reduced for him to the luminous pin-point of his immediate sensation. This is the only strictly demonstrable experience which we can know, and even while we are knowing it, it is gone. Everything in the universe beyond that momentary flash of consciousness, our personal identity, the existence of an objective world, the reality of other persons, and our scientific laws, are creations saturated thoroughly with faith. That this is a *reductio ad absurdum* is obvious, but it is agnosticism readily reduced to absurdity because,

in its essential nature, agnosticism is absurd. No one has ever really practised it, save as a tentative confession of embarrassment, in the attempt to push to its limit the construction of a world out of chaos.

The plain fact, therefore, is that every man must and does build up by faith the conception of the world in which he lives, and the regulating principle of this scientific process, by which a man "sees life steadily and sees it whole," is the assumption that those propositions are true which are necessary to make the facts of life intelligible and reasonable. On this principle man believes in his personal identity, the existence of an objective world and the reality of other persons; on this principle he constructs theories in astronomy to explain the stars, in geology to explain the rocks and in psychology to explain the mental processes; and on this same principle he affirms the truth of God and immortality. To be sure, the facts involved in this last affirmation are spiritual, not material, are more subtile, less tangible, and lend themselves with greater difficulty to confident verification, than the facts of the physical

world, but so far as the fundamental intellectual processes are concerned, the religious interpretation of life, affirming God and immortality, is a venture of faith, like the law of gravitation, to explain the facts. The desires of men, the necessities of their intellectual and moral life, their loves, faiths, hopes and spiritual possibilities, are not only facts, but are facts incomparably more significant than subhuman things, rocks, flowers, fossils, stars, on which the natural sciences are founded. Must not hypotheses be advanced to make these greater facts intelligible? When one remembers that all science is based upon the fundamental assumption that the universe is reasonable, when one considers that all propositions are affirmed as true which are necessary to rationalize the facts of experience, it is clear that if personal permanence is necessary to the reasonableness of human life, which is the most important part of the universe, we have proof of immortality, in which essentially the same intellectual process used by science in asserting the conservation of energy, is applied to the loftier ranges of the spiritual life of man.

III

The necessity of personal permanence to the reasonableness of human life may be, perhaps, most clearly seen when we consider the essentially limitless possibilities which inhere in knowledge and in character. If death ends all, these possibilities are involved in man's very nature only that without excuse they may be brusquely and abruptly snatched away. The body has its cycle of existence, like a tree; it is born, reaches its climacteric, withers and dies, but the mind consciously walks an ascending avenue, widens its horizons, deepens its insight, and is ever aware that there are no limits to the possibilities of growing knowledge. The world of mind is an illimitable realm; thought amid all its achievements is ever a pioneer that hears the call of undiscovered countries over the next range of hills; and the intellect of man, conscious of these exhaustless potentialities, dies, as Goethe did, crying in his last moments, "More light!" To feel the endless lure of truth yet unattained is the essential nature of the intellectual life. If Huxley prefers

Hell to the stoppage of his growing power to know, he is but feeling that elemental passion whose most notable expression Milton puts into the mouth of his magnificent Satan, writhing in the agonies of the pit:

> "For who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity, —
> To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night,
> Devoid of sense and motion?"

Not the small men, but the men of largest mental life most have felt the unforgivable cheat which the universe practises on us, if it opens to us the endless possibility of knowing, only to refuse us its fruition.

What is thus true of mind, is true of character, for there is no conceivable limit to the potentiality of spiritual life. A traveller in Switzerland tells us that, uncertain of his way, he asked a small lad by the roadside where Kandersteg was, and received, so he remarks, the most significant answer that was ever given him. "I do not know, sir," said the boy, "where Kandersteg is, but there is the road to it."

That is an epitome of the spiritual experience of man. The ideal is beyond our ken, it is a goal that never can be located, but always in the progressive achievement of character, we are conscious that we are on an endless road that leads toward unknown perfection. While death, therefore, seems logically the portion of the body, it comes as an impertinent intruder, a meddling interloper into the progress of a spiritual life. Death resides in the body from the beginning; but death is a thief who breaks into the character and steals from it its essential nature of endless aspiration. Not small souls, but the great men of spirit have most been conscious of the illimitable realm into which they are introduced by even the faint beginnings of moral character, and are most aware of the fraud which life practises on them, if it creates, only to disappoint, what Wordsworth calls,

> "That most noble attribute of man,
> Though yet untutored and inordinate,
> That wish for something loftier, more adorned,
> That is the common aspect, daily garb
> Of human life."

Now the argument for immortality has always included the fact which we have just been stating, that human life on the plane of earth alone promises more than it attains, aspires beyond its grasp, and is left at death an unfinished and disappointing fragment, truncated, partial, incomplete, expiring like Moses on Nebo's top, vainly looking towards the lands that he dreamed of conquering but that he never reached. This argument, however, is often stated so that it seems to say in language more or less learned and grandiloquent, that men want to live after death and that, therefore, immortality must be considered true. But this is an utter perversion and caricature of the bearing which the incompleteness of human life at death has upon the problem of life everlasting. The persuasive consideration is not that men want to live after death, but that now after countless ages of painful evolution, the creative process has brought into existence beings who have set their feet upon endless avenues of knowledge and of character. They are the crown of creation; no mother could insist that her babe is worth more than all the

Alps with greater assurance than reason insists on evaluing personalities above unconscious and unmoral rocks and stars. And now when the universe has so achieved a creature in whom evolution has ceased being physical and has become psychical, in whom exhaustless possibilities are at last begotten, does the universe in utter unconsciousness of her achievement toss the potentialities of mind and spirit into Sheol with the refuse of the flesh, and caring no more for one than for the other, bring all alike to a dismal and inconsequential end? Then human life, as we know it, is utterly unreasonable. The most hopeful attitude which we can take towards it is that of the King of Hearts in "Alice in Wonderland," when he examines the cryptic document introduced at the historic trial. "If there is no meaning in it," he says, "that saves a world of trouble, as we needn't try to find it." One generation of incomplete, aspiring persons is wiped off the earth, as a child erases unfinished problems from his slate, that another generation of incomplete, aspiring persons may be created — created and then annihilated. Nothing ever is

finished anywhere. God, like a half-witted artist, amusing himself with tasks that have no meaning, paints pictures in which he barely outlines forms of beauty, full of promise, only to erase them and begin again. Aspiring characters, as an agnostic said, are "trying to get music out of sackbuts and psalteries, that never were in tune and seemingly never will be," and our social labors simply build transient oases in a desert world, empty of spiritual meaning — oases that in the end the desert will consume in burning sand. To say that the loftiest aspects of our human life in such a universe are unintelligible and unreasonable is surely far within the boundaries of the obvious.

When, therefore, we assume, as science always does in the physical realm, that this is a reasonable world, we have a positive and assuring argument for immortality. Of course, this may be an utterly erratic universe, not in the least to be depended on to furnish reliable clews to truth, but such a conception makes science as impossible as it makes immortality unlikely. When irregularities in the orbit of Uranus were dis-

covered, for which there was no visible explanation, science did not throw up her hands in hopelessness, consenting that the heavens were capricious and whimsical. Rather, Leverrier computed the size, position and orbit of a planet which, if the perturbations of Uranus were to be made intelligible, must be in the heavens. Because of her fundamental faith that the universe is not irrational, science knew that the planet must be there, although unseen, and when sight consummated insight, and Neptune was discovered, less than one degree from the spot indicated in the prophetic affirmations of Leverrier, the faith of science in the dependableness of the world was justified. Not otherwise is personal permanence essential to the reasonableness of human life; the orbits of aspiring mind and character demand it to make them intelligible; and the faith that insight, so based upon the reasonableness of creation, shall some day be turned to sight, when we have eyes to see the unseen world, is a faith built on foundations firm and deep.

IV

If the basal assumption of science that the universe is reasonable supplies so strong a foundation for faith in immortality, how much more does the basal assumption of religion that the universe is beneficent argue, of necessity, the permanence of personality! If God is good in any sense imaginable to man, then he cares for his creatures, has a purposeful meaning in them, and regards them with solicitous concern. A just and fatherly God cannot have brought into being children, capable of endless growth, aspiring after perfect knowledge and character, only to toss them one by one into oblivion, until at last, tired even of the house he built for them, he burns it up. As the seers have always felt, the goodness and honor of God are at stake in the question of immortality, —

> "Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
> Thou madest man, he knows not why,
> He thinks he was not made to die;
> And thou hast made him: thou art just."

Of course the confident affirmation that God is good has always met the amazed

and jeering accusation of anthropomorphism. Your God is your lengthened shadow, men say; you have taken the coin of the realm universal and stamped your own visage on it. What the accuser obviously means is that a man has committed an astonishing blunder when he goes down into his own experience, and there takes the best and highest that he knows for his interpretation of God. The suggestion is that when a materialist takes rocks and stars, or a monist takes abstract notions like energy and law, for his idea of Deity, he has performed the sublimely ingenious feat of overleaping the boundaries of human experience and finding a symbol of God that is not anthropomorphic. Of course he has done no such thing. Can a man leap outside himself and look at the world through other than human eyes or conceive it in other than human terms? All the rocks and stars I know and can use in thought, are rocks and stars which, in the form I know them, have been made inside my experience; all the abstract ideas of energy and law I have are those of my own mind's construction; the entire world

in which I live and from which I can pick symbols by which to interpret God is the world of my own consciousness — an anthropomorphic world, because conformed to the laws of my own thinking. I have no pool other than my own consciousness in which to fish for my ideas of anything. The question is never whether or not a man will interpret God by some element in his experience, he cannot help that; the question is only whether he will interpret God at all, and if so, what elements of his experience he will use, the low or the high. Physical energy is just as much our experience of body read out into the world as personality is our experience of self-consciousness. Materialist though a man be, down into his own experience he must plunge like the veriest Christian, however he tries to escape it; only if he chooses, he may bring up body instead of soul, the lowest instead of the highest, for his interpretation of Deity. It is faith in either case, however, and it is anthropomorphism too. Christianity's method, therefore, is not one whit different from the materialist's or the monist's save in this, that instead

of choosing a lower part of experience, or a by-product of experience, Christianity, ranging over the hierarchy of elements there, from the vassal serf of physical energy to the spiritual king, self-conscious personality, hungering for righteousness and ablaze with love, takes this last, this highest form of life it knows, and that too with lofty and undiscourageable optimism extended to the farthest boundaries of imagination, as the only adequate highway to travel toward the truth about God. The Christian is anthropomorphic, as every one has to be, but being under such necessity, he thinks that the whole of man is not too big nor too good to be the symbol of God.

"But," says some one, now no longer able to contain impatience with such an exultant idea of God, "do you mean that by interpreting God in terms of the humanly best you can imagine, you have comprehended absolute Deity, the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God, the philosophic world-ground, the ontological essence of the universe?" To which the Christian, likewise impatient, answers, "Do you think that I go hunting for

the sun at noon with a butterfly net, that I seek to imprison the Most High in a human symbol? Who am I that I should talk about absolute Deity or seek to grasp the Infinite with a finite mind? Only this is my faith, that through all eternity, with all new disclosures of God, never will a man who starts with the best he knows have to stop, turn around, come back, and begin again on a road toward God that is less than that best. Never will he have to take a path that is lower than personal, or that negatives holiness and love. The road leads what distance beyond my gaze I cannot guess, but it is the same road and not another." Sir Oliver Lodge has given in one sentence a complete summary of the Christian's method of approach to the idea of God: "I will not believe that it is given to man to have thoughts, nobler or loftier than the real truth of things."

When, therefore, to the Christian the old taunt is flung, "The lions, if they could have pictured God, would have pictured him in fashion like a lion," the answer is ready at once: Good for the lions! For if they had been gifted with a faith superb

enough to do so worthy and exalted a thing as to take the best they had and think out toward God along the pathway of it, they would have been in so far Christian in their philosophy of life. It were certainly nobler and truer to be a lion interpreting God in terms of the best lion he could imagine, than to be a man interpreting God in terms of dirt.

But if God is good in any such way as this, then death does not end all. Not only in general is an unreasonable world utterly incompatible with a just and beneficent God, but in particular, a God of good will must care for his creation. What, then, in all the universe can be the object of the divine solicitude? Is God vain about his sun and stars? Is he twirling them about his thumb and finger, like a child, proud of their scintillating revolutions, until transposing them and caring nothing that the transposition incidentally annihilates the transient race of beings on the earth, he will twirl them in some other way? Such a conception of God is impossible. If God exists at all, he must care for his creation, and if he cares at all, he must care

for the crown of creation, personality. Charles Darwin tells us that at times he had a warm sense of a friendly God, but that at other times this feeling vanished. Yet even with so fugitive a faith in a universe that cared for its creatures, he wrote, "It is an intolerable thought that man and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation, after such long-continued slow progress." To one who is deeply convinced that Darwin's occasional and evanescent sense of a friendly God may be a man's reasonable and constant faith, such a conception of the world is not only intolerable; it is impossible. To talk about the fatherhood of a God, who begets children, only to annihilate them, is absurd. The goodness of God is plainly at stake when one discusses immortality, for if death ends all, the Creator is building men like sand houses on the shore, caring not a whit that the fateful waves will quite obliterate them all. If death ends all, the struggle and aspiration of humanity have meant no more to him than the mist that rests in the morning on the Alps and at noon is gone. If death ends all, there is

no God of whom goodness, in any connotation imaginable to man, can be predicated.

How indissolubly faith in immortality is interwoven with faith in a beneficent Deity is plain when one considers the venerable objection to belief that God is good, which has always made acceptance of Christian optimism difficult. The present evils of human life, its miseries, diseases and sins, its Lisbon earthquake that caused Goethe even when six years old to doubt the justice of the universe, and its San Francisco fire that made more atheists than preachers will convert in many a year, — these are the standard and colossal arguments against the honor and beneficence of God. To this objection only one answer ever has been possible. Those who in spite of the injustice and evil of our present life have still believed that God is good have insisted that there is no more reason to interpret human existence evilly in terms of its woes, than to interpret it happily in terms of its amazing story of spiritual growth, and that while it is impossible to account for goodness in man if

there is no goodness at the heart of the world, it is entirely possible that the incidental evils of a process, leading toward a worthy consummation, may be explicable when the process is complete. The assertion of the beneficence of God has always depended for its full support upon this appeal to the arbitrament of the future. Like Gladstone, defeated in the House of Commons, the man of faith has returned undismayed to face his enemies, wearing a boutonnière of defiance on his coat, and saying, "I appeal to time!"

If, therefore, all worthy consummation to human life is denied, if men, seeing their present inexplicable woes, are convinced that no resultant future will ever show the reason for a process that here was mysterious and hard, as a vase might understand in retrospect the deft and strenuous fingering of the potter and the overwhelming heat of the furnace, then the basis is removed on which man can rest his faith in a friendly universe. The universe distinctly is not friendly, if it has reared with such pain the moral life of man, only to topple it over like a house of cards.

While a man, therefore, may believe in immortality without believing in the goodness of God, he cannot reasonably believe in the goodness of God without believing in immortality. Indeed, the Buddhist passion to escape continued existence bears impressive witness that without a beneficent Deity, life everlasting, while believable, is positively undesirable. The "noble, eightfold path" of Buddha, by which a man shall reach Nirvana, and become "like a flame that has been blown out," has been preached to men with a missionary enthusiasm that can find its equal, if at all, only in Christianity, not because Buddhists do not believe in immortality, but because they do believe in it, and because, conceiving God not as beneficent, but as unconscious, unmoral Being, devoid of character and purpose, immortality to them is so undesirable that to escape it is their supreme ambition. The wheel of continuous existence is their terror. They proclaim as a gospel that to become here a passionless sepulchre in which all desires are dead is the way to that reabsorption into unconscious Being which is

the great salvation of the race, the passionately desired escape from the necessity of living. "Let, therefore, no man love anything!" says Buddha. "Loss of the beloved is evil. Those who love nothing and hate nothing have no fetters." Continuous life in a universe that is not friendly is a bane to be abhorred. When, however, a man positively believes in a God of good will and purpose, eternal life to him is not only inevitable; it is desirable. The difference between Buddha's attitude towards immortality and the New Testament's is not that one believes in existence after death, while the other is unsure or disbelieving; both alike are positively convinced of the soul's continuance. But one, conceiving everlasting life in terms of a Fatherless world, dreads it as a mediæval Christian dreaded Hell; while the other, crying that death cannot separate us from the love of God, claims it as an inspiration and a glorious hope. One strength of Buddhism lies in the fact that the idea of a perpetual, self-conscious existence, which through everlasting ages trails after it the full memory of all

previous experience and from itself never can escape, causes to the man who endeavors to imagine it what Professor Goldwin Smith calls "mental vertigo." The human mind finds it as impossible to handle this conception as in mathematics it finds it impossible to make infinity a member of an equation without invalidating the result. Absolute infinity in any realm cannot be dealt with by the human mind. What God may mean by personal permanence beyond our present power to picture or to comprehend, the thought of man may not usefully inquire, but with the faith that the universe is friendly comes the faith that it purposes endless progress for us, and this is sufficient, without knowing more, for the deepest human needs.

Whether one starts, therefore, from the scientific affirmation that the universe is reasonable or from the religious faith that the universe is friendly, he comes inevitably to the conviction that death does not end all. The assurance of immortality is grounded on great foundations. The reasonableness and beneficence of creation are pledged against the annihilation of man.

V

No other reasons for faith in immortality compare in fundamental importance with those which have been mentioned, but there are at least two further considerations which tend greatly to confirm belief in everlasting life. That the universe is reasonable and beneficent and so will certainly preserve its moral gains, is a judgment of value, in making which the single individual, unsupported by his fellows, might well feel insecure. The main facts of Beethoven's life may be so clearly ascertained by one investigator that, whether any one agrees with him or not, he is convinced; but that Beethoven's music is beautiful would be exceedingly difficult for a single critic to maintain, if all those most competent to judge in the æsthetic realm insisted that the sonatas were miserable music. If one inquires the nature of the proof demanded when men seek to demonstrate that the Sistine Madonna is glorious, or that the Prize Song in "Die Meistersinger" is superb, he sees that it depends in no small degree upon the consensus of opinion among those

most competent to judge. If, therefore, a man, feeling that the reasonableness and friendliness of the cosmic order are worthy foundations for his faith in a future life, should find himself alone in such an estimate, while ranged against him the seers of the race marshalled their contrary judgments, it would require an almost unattainably heroic obstinacy of opinion to insist that he is right. Who, upon the other hand, can calculate the confirming influence on our faith, if the judgment which we have reached is not withstood, but with astonishing unanimity is supported by the authority of those spiritual seers who have seen most deeply the significance of life?

This use of authority is not by any means irrational. Even science, from whose realm authority in the old sense of dictatorial dogmatism has been banished, welcomes authority in the opinions of able and disinterested experts. Few men of all the millions who believe the facts have ever measured the 92,000,000 miles to the sun, or for themselves have fathomed the secrets of the scientific theories which, taken for granted on expert authority, are

used in daily business. If a man refused to make use of any knowledge save that which he personally had proved, he would live in a universe painfully meagre and desiccated. When a man believes Mr. Edison's assertions in the realm of electricity, it is generally not because he himself has demonstrated them, but because he trusts Mr. Edison's ability and honesty, finds what he himself knows of electricity not negatived, but illustrated and completed by the opinions of the specialist, and is confirmed in his faith by the practical results which Mr. Edison manifestly attains on the basis of his truths. Even in science one cannot easily exaggerate the practical importance of the expert's authority.

This use of authority in science, however, is insignificant in comparison with its use in those higher ranges of man's life where judgments of worth are necessary. There, as Browning says,

"One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools!"

If in the establishment of some scientific theory all Asia and Africa count for nothing, and the masses of unqualified men pro-

test and disbelieve in vain, because the specialists who really know have seen the truth and spoken it, how much more in the rating of beautiful music, painting and architecture, do men of dull eyes shrug their shoulders to no effect, and insensitive minds seek in vain to turn appreciation into cynicism! The seers are the demonstrators of the value-judgments of the world. Not in religious truth alone, but in all spiritual concerns of beauty and goodness, we ordinary men stand upon the slope and cry to those upon the summit, that with their wider vision they must interpret to us the real truth of life.

Men's faith in immortality, therefore, is immeasurably confirmed by the testimony of the spiritual seers. With overwhelming unanimity they bear witness to their faith in a reasonable world that "will not leave us in the dust." If we seek counsel of the most comprehensive spirit outside the range of the Jewish-Christian development, we hear Socrates saying through Plato: "Then beyond question the soul is immortal and imperishable and will truly exist in another world." If we seek counsel of that

spiritual Master, who most seems to include in himself the ideals of all centuries, all races, both sexes, all ages, as the pure white light gathers up and blends the split and partial colors of the spectrum, we hear him saying with perfect confidence: "In my Father's house are many mansions." The argument is often urged that the universal belief in immortality, held by all men in all ages, makes strong presumption of immortality's truth; that if the analogy of physical life holds good, no universal human functioning exists without an objective fact to call it into being; so that without the stimulus of the existence of another world, it is inconceivable that all races would have believed in it. But this argument, founded on the faith of the vast, obscure masses of mankind, while it has its place, does not compare in persuasive power with the consideration of those elevated souls, who, rising far above the common levels of our human life, have from their altitude assured us, not with less confidence, but ever with more positiveness as they stood higher in the spiritual scale, that everlasting life is true. Unless Germany denies that men

like Kant are her deep-seeing prophets; unless England chooses lesser souls than her Wordsworth, Browning, and Tennyson to represent her loftiest spiritual insight; unless America says to Emerson, to Whittier, and to their like that they are not our seers; men must confess that with marvellous unanimity the most elevated and far-seeing spirits of the race have most believed in immortality. Not the small souls, but the men of "a lordly great compass within" have felt most keenly the necessity, reasonableness and assured certainty of life eternal.

Now this appeal to the seers is not in its deepest significance an appeal to an external authority. What the greatest men ordinarily feel is what ordinary men feel in their greatest moments. The appeal to the seers is an appeal to the plain man's best hours. In a singularly revealing sentence, Professor Tyndall says: "I have noticed during years of self-observation that it is not in hours of clearness and of vigor that this doctrine (of materialism) commends itself to my mind; for in the presence of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears, as offering

no solution of the mystery in which we dwell and of which we form a part." So every man is aware of his self-evidencing high moments, when the ground rises under his feet and he reaches for a time a spiritual eminence, from which horizons are visible and vistas stand clear that are not within his ken on ordinary days. The arbitrament of the great spirits of the race gets its authority for us because they but confirm the vision of our own elevated hours. The most significant choice which in the end every man makes, is between his own low and his own high moments, as interpreters of life's true meaning. When then a man appeals from himself at his worst to himself at his best, is there any question what the decision is upon the matter of eternal life and all its implications? Does a man at his best tend to think that he is flesh with a transient mental aspect, that there are no permanent forces save the physical powers that build the solar systems and destroy them; that the earth throws away with utter carelessness personality, her most precious treasure, and never resolves to harmony the dissonance of her

inequities? Does a man at his best feel in human life no intrinsic and eternal value to inspire sacrifice for spiritual quality in the individual and to furnish basis for passionate and hopeful service to the race? Above all, does any man in his sanest, worthiest moments, consent to think that the universe preserves none of the moral gains, which have cost such an incalculable price in blood and tears and toil? Is he willing to accept as his view of the cosmic meaning Thompson's portrayal of a world that throws away with heedless hand the spiritual achievements it has wrought?

"The world rolls round forever like a mill,
It grinds out life and death, and good and ill,
It has no purpose, heart, or mind, or will.

While air of space and Time's full river flow,
The mill must blindly whirl unresting so,
It may be wearing out, but who can know?

Man might know one thing were his sight less dim,
That it whirls, not to suit his petty whim,
That it is quite indifferent to him:

Nay, doth it use him harshly, as he saith?
It grinds him some slow years of bitter breath,
Then grinds him back into eternal death."

Is that the truth of the universe, as in a man's best hours, it appeals to him? Rather a wholesome mind must finally protest against a useless creation, that as Professor James put it, could as well, like a reversed cinematograph, run one way as another, because it means nothing and issues nowhere. Platonic dialectics to prove the immateriality of the soul and hence its necessary immortality no longer interest the human mind; the bare continuance of a spiritual substance, deathless because it essentially is uncompounded and therefore indestructible, is not even desired; but desire for the preservation of the race's active, spiritual values no generation can outgrow. The passing of special arguments and of whole philosophical systems leaves that problem still central and dominant. Here, after all, is the crux of the whole question, that no man in those hours when he is intellectually and spiritually at his best can consent, without violence to his profoundest instincts, to believe in a world that loses all its gains, a world in which nothing that we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall

exist. Without some form of personal permanence that issue to the cosmic process seems inevitable.

VI

The underlying reason for the seeming inadequacy of all proofs of the life to come is that their absolute verification is impossible. Hypotheses in geology can be verified beyond a peradventure by putting them to the test of facts visible and tangible. But hypotheses about the future life, in the nature of the case, cannot be confirmed by an appeal to experiences beyond the grave. When, in answer to this objection, it is said that to require a kind of proof which necessarily is out of the question is an unreasonable demand, this, obviously, does not better the case. The really fruitful consideration in this regard is that verification of the hypothesis of everlasting life is not altogether impossible. Immortality does not concern the future world alone; it concerns this present existence, for, as we have said, if a man is immortal at all, he is immortal now. Whenever a man, therefore, begins now to

live as though he were immortal, he is putting the truth to the test of life, and seeking verification of its validity in terms of its practical consequences. A world in which poison made men strong and foods destroyed them would be no more unreasonable than a world in which falsehood made great characters while truth applied issued in ignoble spirit and unworthy life. Indeed, we call arsenic poison just because it does destroy us, and good bread we call food, because it builds us up. So in practical life we count those things true which, taken for true, prove useful, and those things false which will not verify themselves by the difference that they make to life. The engineer, who, engaged in the construction of a bridge, first plots his plans according to the laws of mathematics, then submits them to experts for corroboration, and then building his structure, looks for the ultimate confirmation of his judgment in the completed work, standing the test of use, indicates by his method of procedure the road to all verification of truth. Let a man so test the affirmation of immortality. Let his best judgment decide that it is true,

and this judgment be substantiated by the verdict of the seers, and then let him start to live now as though he were immortal. What confirming consequences are sure to come! The man who lives as though he were immortal lives in a universe where the highest spiritual values are permanent, outlasting the growth and dissolution of the stars; where personality, whether in himself or others, is infinitely precious and has everlasting issues; where character is the supreme concern of life, in behalf of which all else may reasonably be sacrificed; where no social service ever can be vain, if it registers itself in even one man made better, and where, in all public-minded devotion to moral causes on the earth, we are not digging artificial lakes to be filled by our own buckets, in hopeless contest with an alien universe, but are rather building channels down which the eternal spiritual purpose of the living God shall flow to its "far-off divine event." The truth of immortality makes great living.

It is just here that Jesus gives his most substantial contribution to faith in life everlasting. His teaching of immortality

has the authoritative value of a verdict from a spiritual seer, but his life has a verifying value, exhibiting to us once for all the sort of character resultant from living as though immortality were true. At least once, in him, we have seen what assurance of eternal life means to character. For Jesus differs even from Socrates in this, that while Socrates argued for immortality and believed it, Jesus never stopped to argue, but taking it for granted, as an immediate and unquestionable intuition, lived as though it undoubtedly were true. Others have analyzed the reasons for believing in life everlasting, as one might analyze a score of Mozart and discuss arguments to prove its beauty; but Jesus lived immortality, as one might play Mozart perfectly. When one considers, therefore, the character of Jesus, in which faith in God was the warp and certainty of life eternal was the woof, he is seeing the consummate verification of faith in immortality. This is the result in human life when personal permanence passes from theory into the verifying test of character. Let a man begin to live as though he were not going to die, and his tone of

spiritual quality rises by sure degrees towards Christlikeness; let a man begin to live as though death were the end of all, and even those who themselves have held this creed confess that the deepest motives for character grow dim, and that social service is blighted by disillusionment. Before a man gives himself to disbelief in personal permanence, let him consider this result, that in such a world falsehood makes the best character and truth destroys it.

No man, therefore, need stop with the vague possibility of life to come. Immortality is a hypothesis, if you will, but so is gravitation, and around them both considerations weighty and assuring gather in support. The reasonableness of the universe is pledged to the immortality of man: the beneficence of God is unthinkable without it; the verdict of the spiritual seers confirms it; and when it is put to the verifying test of life it builds the loftiest character.

Death is a great adventure, but none need go unconvinced that there is an issue to it. The man of faith may face it as Columbus faced his first voyage from the

shores of Spain. What lies across the sea, he cannot tell; his special expectations all may be mistaken; but his insight into the clear meanings of present facts may persuade him beyond doubt that the sea has another shore. Such confident faith, so founded upon reasonable grounds, shall be turned to sight, when, for all the dismay of the unbelieving, the hope of the seers is rewarded by the vision of a new continent.

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